



NO. 34 \$2.50

EISNER INTERVIEWS MILTON CANIFF

Will EISNER'S THE SPIRIT



MARVEL REPORTS THAT FRANK MILLER'S DAREDEVIL RECEIVES THE MAJORITY OF THE FAN-MAIL SENT TO THE NEW YORK OFFICES, AND THAT MILLER IS MOST FREQUENTLY COMPLIMENTED ON HIS USE OF HEAVY BLACKS. IN AN ATTEMPT TO PLEASE HIS READERSHIP, MILLER IS PLANNING DAREDEVIL GUEST-APPEARANCES BY SLAPPY WHITE, PEARL BAILEY, ELLA FITZGERALD AND FATS DOMINO.

JIM, WHAT THE HECK ARE YOU DOING? YOU KNOW AS WELL AS I DO THIS ISN'T ONE OF OUR REGULAR MONTHLY APPEARANCES IN "THE COMIC READER," IT'S AN AD FOR OUR NEW COLLECTION FROM KITCHEN SINK PRESS: "FANDOM CONFIDENTIAL STARRING JIM ENGEL AND CHUCK FIALA"!!

LOOK CHUCK, I TOLD THAT JERK DENIS, AND I'LL TELL YOU! "FANDOM CONFIDENTIAL" ENJOYS A STERLING REPUTATION AS THE FUNNIEST FANZINE FEATURE IN HISTORY! WHEN PEOPLE SEE PHOTOS OF YOU AND ME BEHIND THIS TABLE READING NEWS OR INTERVIEWING SOME COMIC BOOK CHARACTER, THEY EXPECT OUR USUAL TOP-NOTCH PARODY AND SUPER-SATIRE, AND I'M NOT ABOUT TO CHEAPEN OUR IMAGE OR DECEIVE OUR READERS BY DISGUIISING SOME LOUSY ADVERTISEMENT AS OUR WACKY WIT AND SOPHISTICATION!

AND I'LL TELL YOU, ENGEL, THAT YOUR HIGH AND MIGHTY POSTURING DON'T FOOL ME FOR A MINUTE! YOU'RE JUST TRYING TO MAKE YOURSELF LOOK GOOD AT MY EXPENSE JUST BECAUSE YOU GOT COLD FEET AT THE LAST MINUTE! AND IF I WAS YOU, PAL, I'D STOP BAD-MOUTHING DENIS!!



WHY?? JUST BECAUSE KITCHEN'S FINALLY WISED UP TO THE FACT THAT IF HE EVER WANTS TO PUT HIS RINKY-DINK OPERATION ON THE MAP, HE'D BETTER HOOK UP WITH A HOT PROPERTY LIKE US AND STOP PIDDLING AROUND WITH SMALL-TIMERS LIKE CRUMB AND WILL EISNER?

NO, BECAUSE HE'S GIVEN US AD SPACE IN HIS TOP-SELLING MAGAZINE, AND IF YOU'LL JUST COOL YOUR JETS AND TALK UP OUR RAG, WE STAND TO MAKE A COUPLE OF BUCKEROOS OFF THIS!

WELL! I STRONGLY SUGGEST THAT ALL YOU COMIC FANS OUT THERE PURCHASE A COPY OF OUR HILARIOUS COLLECTION! 26 PAGES OF OUR ORIGINAL "COMIC READER" ANTIKS, PLUS A NEW 7-PAGER DONE ESPECIALLY FOR THIS BOOK! IF YOU LOVE COMICS AND LAUGHING, YOU'RE SURE TO LOVE US!

THERE! NOW THAT'S THE SPIRIT!



WHERE?

OVER THERE.



UH... IF YOU GUYS ARE THROUGH, CAN WE GET ON WITH THE REST OF MY MAGAZINE NOW?



THE DEPT. of LOOSE ENDS

When we reprinted the Eisner/Fine collaboration "M-U-R-D-E-R" a few issues ago, readers wrote in and asked if Eisner had ever written any other stories in which the entire dialogue was alliterative. The answer is no — but this time we bring you the next best thing — an entire *Spirit* story done in rhyme. "Killer McNobby" is the name of this pugilistic extravaganza, and it originally appeared on June 1, 1941, as close to the first anniversary of *The Spirit's* creation as the Sunday-only schedule would permit.

"The Genius," dating from October 12th of the same year, features the third appearance of Algernon Tidewater, the lollipop-sucking tyke known after the war as "P.S." In later stories his brother, here called Bertram, was occasionally referred to as "Brains Brown." The pair entered the strip on June 22, 1941, where Algernon was seen kicking Hitler in the oddball "Tale of the Dictator's Reform," reprinted in issue 32 of this magazine. P.S. and Brains made many subsequent appearances in *The Spirit*, either as a dynamic duo or as part of Ebony's gang of kid-friends. The name "P.S." seems to have come about when Eisner returned from the war and held a reader contest to rechristen the character. During this period he also was known as "Kilroy."

"The Eisner Travel Agency" — here retitled "Caramba!" — is loosely related to the two 1946 episodes set in Caramba, the Crime Capital of the World. Both of the earlier pieces were reprinted in the first Kitchen Sink "underground" *Spirit*. Like the other Caramba tales, it features a pair of the strip's major villains, in this case The Octopus and Mr. Carrion.

Jules Feiffer scripted "Vietnam '50" back in the days when nobody even knew there was a Vietnam. In an interview with John Benson which appeared in *Panels No.1*, Feiffer had the following to say about this episode, which he had not viewed since the day it was published:

"More politics. I sneaked it in. I think I read somewhere that there were a bunch of French Foreign Legionnaires who were ex-Nazis helping the French in Indo-China. 'Viet Nam, or as the Western countries call it... Indo China.' That's amazing! Because when Viet Nam happened and I became aware of it, I didn't remember this at all. I didn't remember ever knowing of Viet Nam. I mean, I know I wrote it. But where did I get this information? This is incredible! This is 19-fucking-50. Five-oh. That's four years before Nixon sent off a trial balloon saying that the U.S. should send forces to Viet Nam to relieve the French, and Hubert Humphrey seconded him. I'm very impressed with myself. My first Viet Nam strip was November, 1950! Who says I'm not an activist?"

Not us, Jules!

—cat yronwode



THE SPIRIT

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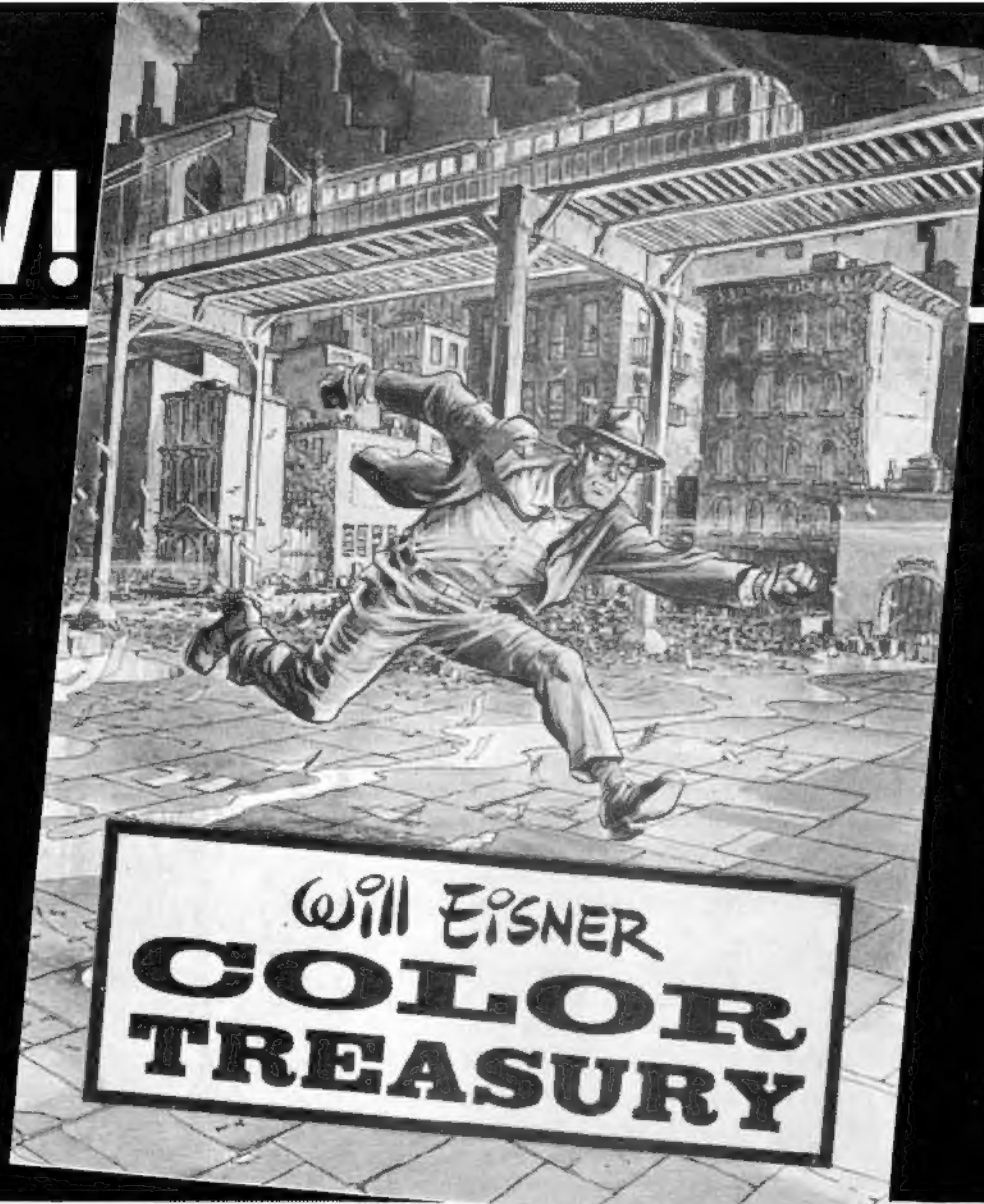
No. 34 APRIL 1982

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Will Eisner's *THE SPIRIT*. Published bi-monthly by Kitchen Sink Comix, a division of Krupp Comic Works, Inc., No. 2 Swamp Road, Princeton, WI 54968. ISSN No. 0279-5523. Subscription rates: \$15/year (6 issues) in North America. \$18 year elsewhere (sea mail) or \$28/year via airmail. **SECOND CLASS POSTAGE PAID at Princeton, WI.** POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: *The Spirit*, No. 2 Swamp Rd., Princeton, WI 54968. Contents © copyright 1982 by Will Eisner. All rights reserved under Universal Copyright Convention. The name "The Spirit" is registered by the U.S. Patent Office. Marca Registrada, Marque Deposee. Nothing may be reproduced in whole or in part without written permission of the publisher. This magazine is printed in the U.S.A. Wholesale inquiries are invited. Phone (414) 296-3972.

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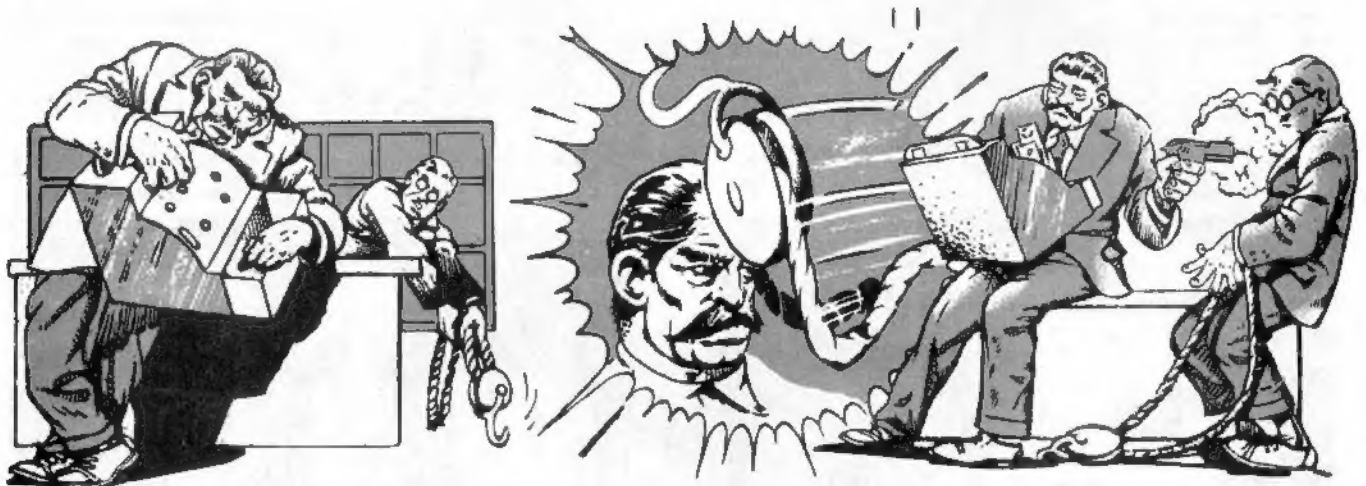
THE Spirit



Harken dear readers, oh lend us
your ear ...
List' to the tale of the man
without fear ...
Killer McNobby was his horrible
name ...
A terrible man of notorious
fame ...
Death was his business ... he
dispensed it with ease ...
He'd murder a man as quick
as you please
Maiming and gouging was
merely his hobby
Ah yes ... a terrible man was
Killer McNobby !!

BY Will Eisner





Now.. starting small at this infamous call , he decided to steal for a living ...
 His victim, the dope, swung at him with a rope and was killed without any misgiving..



Yes.. here's a career for a man without fear thought he as he counted the loot ...
 Dead people don't peep and with overhead cheap, he could soon make a name to boot ...



So.. with gun full of lead and such thoughts in his head, he started to go on his way ...
 He would stab some poor men and steal now and then, but committed one murder each day ...



His name it spelled death and we all held our
 breath when his deeds were told o'er the air...
 He looked so darned tough that his face was enough
 to kill a man right then and there ...



But in North Central City, not changing our ditty,
 lived The Spirit but deep underground ...
 A man whose great name was as equal in fame in
 completely the other way 'round ...



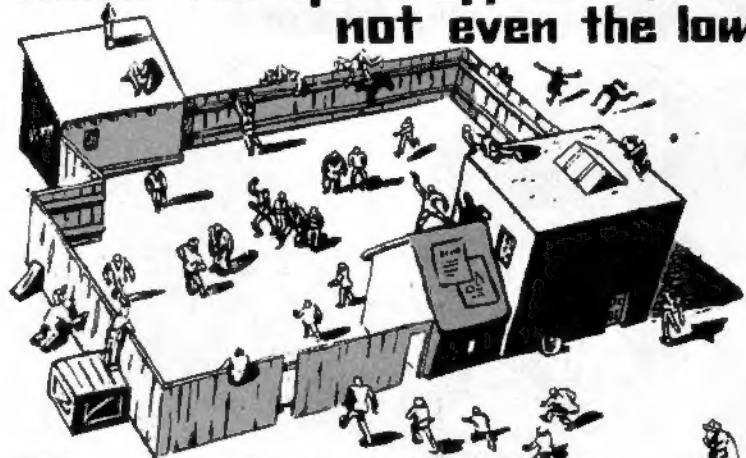
The Spirit, you see, as it happens to be, is a smasher
 of rackets and evil ...
 He decided 'twas time that he halted all this crime
 and arrested this social boll-weevil ...



So without any gun.. he never lugs one.. he set out
to search thru the slums ...
The news of his coming.. he never went slumming..
was spread by fast spies on the run ...



Now the underworld knew 'twas a storm in the
brow.. and gathered to cheer for their champ ...
When The Spirit appeared, not a gangster was near..
not even the lowliest tramp ...



Oh they met in Kelly's yard and the killer's eyes
were hard as The Spirit calmly bowed and slowly said..
You're at the end of your rope.. you'll confess I hope ,
for, if not, I'll beat you till you're all but dead ...



The killer sneered and cried, "Better men than you have tried," as he promptly drew a gun and tried to shoot.. The Spirit stepped in low, swung a careful blow and smashed McNobby squarely in the snoot ...



The crowd held its breath, 'twas a fight till the death.. for the killer quickly matched him punch for punch.. The Spirit hit the floor, but as yet he wasn't sore, for he countered with a punch that made him crunch...



Now.. the killer clearly saw a man like this before, he never fought or yet encountered ... For each time he dropped his guard The Spirit swung... but hard!.. and followed thru before McNobby countered!! , 7



Chorus
Oh

They jabbed and they hit...

They slugged and they kicked!



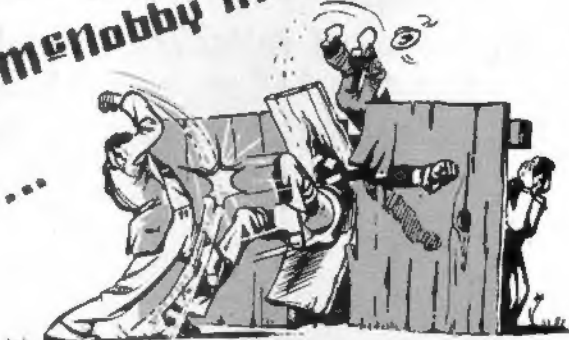
No tricks were barred...

As they rolled 'round the yard!



The Spirit knew no fear...

To McRobby life was dear!



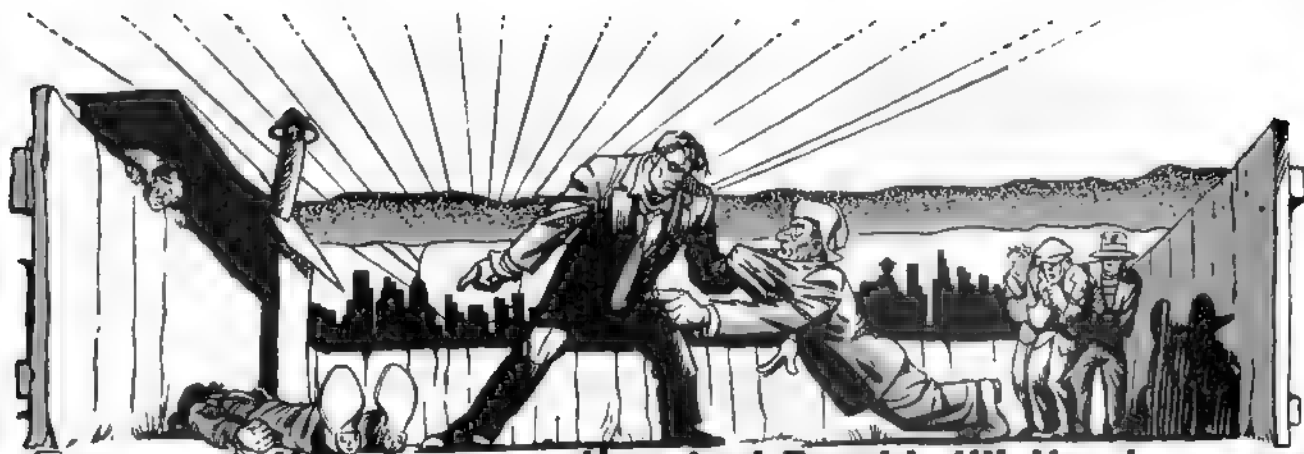
The Spirit slammed and slammed...

The Killer hooked and whammed!



8 left right, left right... The Spirit's fists were dynamite!





**By now.. it was morn..they had fought till the dawn and
The Spirit slowly turned to the crowd ...
Their champ he was done,they squealed everyone as
before The Spirit, Killer bent and cowed !**



**Oh yes.. their stories jibed for when Dolan arrived,
McNobby's guilt was clear to everyone ...
Why even McNobby,when pressed,readily confessed
while The Spirit cooly sighed,"The case is done!"**



**Then.. The Spirit headed north as they lugged McNobby
off, and the morning sun 'rose brilliant full and clear ...
And so... over soup grown cold it is very often told ..
alas ... The Story of the man who had no fear!!**

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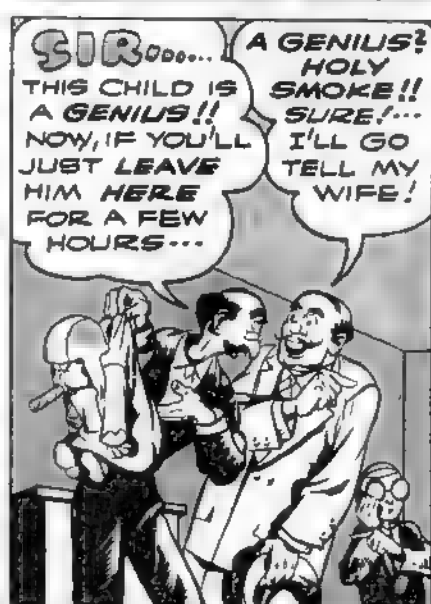
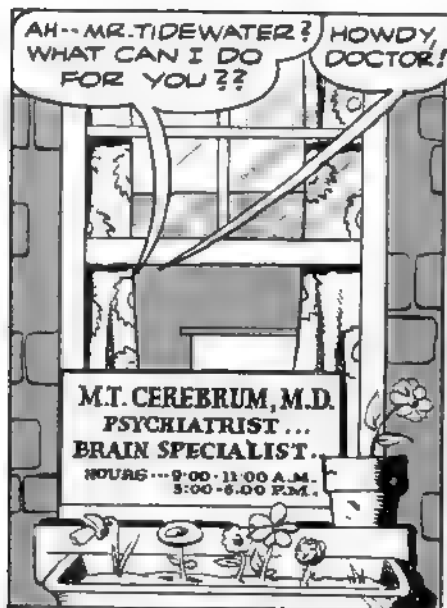
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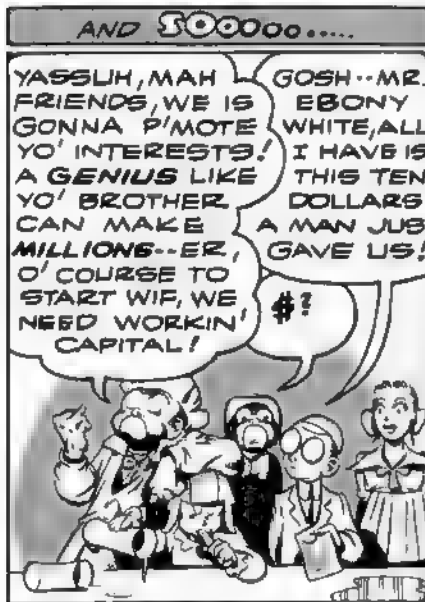
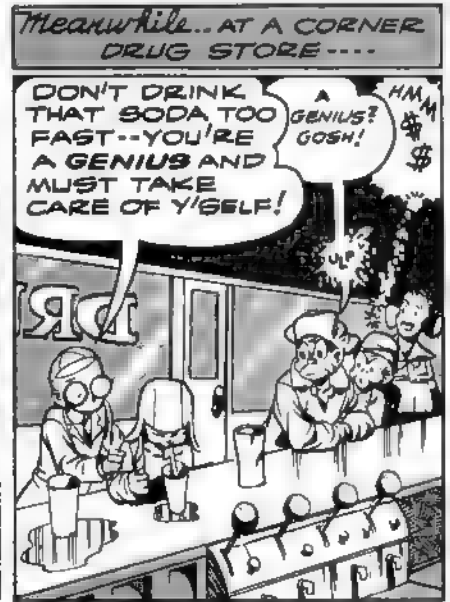
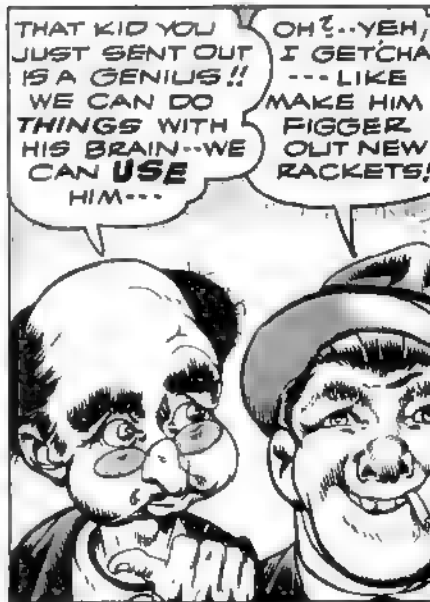
GENIUS

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED OCTOBER 12, 1941

ACTION
Mystery
ADVENTURE





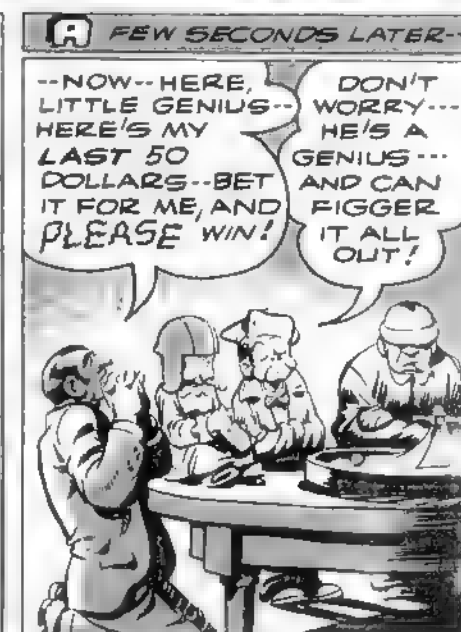
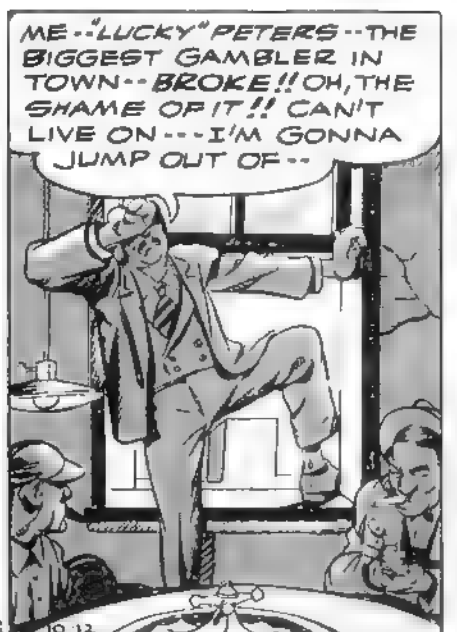


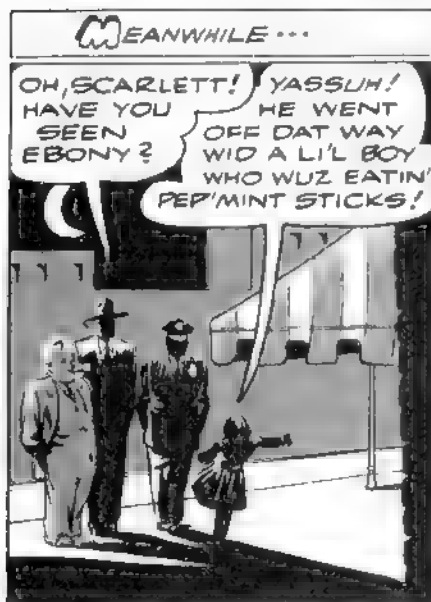


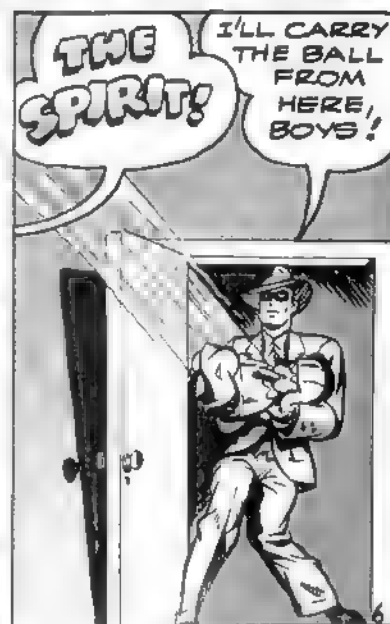
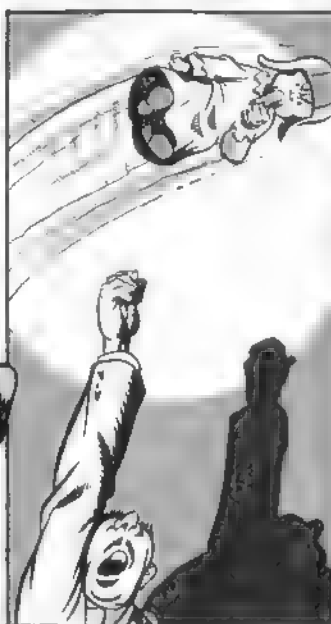
..AND BACK AT THE CORNER...



MEANWHILE, IN A NEARBY BUILDING, FATE SHUFFLES THE DECK AND BRINGS UP A CARD FROM THE BOTTOM!

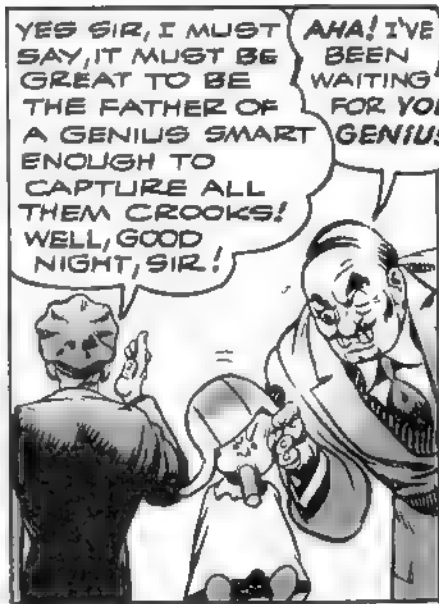








LATER, AT THE TIDEWATER HOME ----



Waaaa

REPORT CARD
READING: D
WRITING: D
SPELLING: D
CONDUCT: F
I.Q.: 6

SPANK SPANK

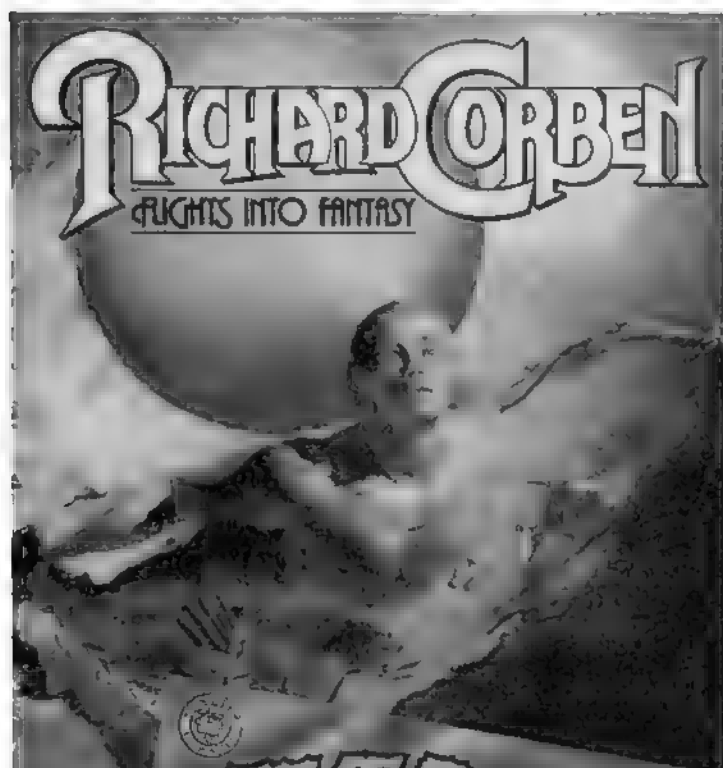
THAT EVENING, AT WILDWOOD ----



AND STILL LATER ----



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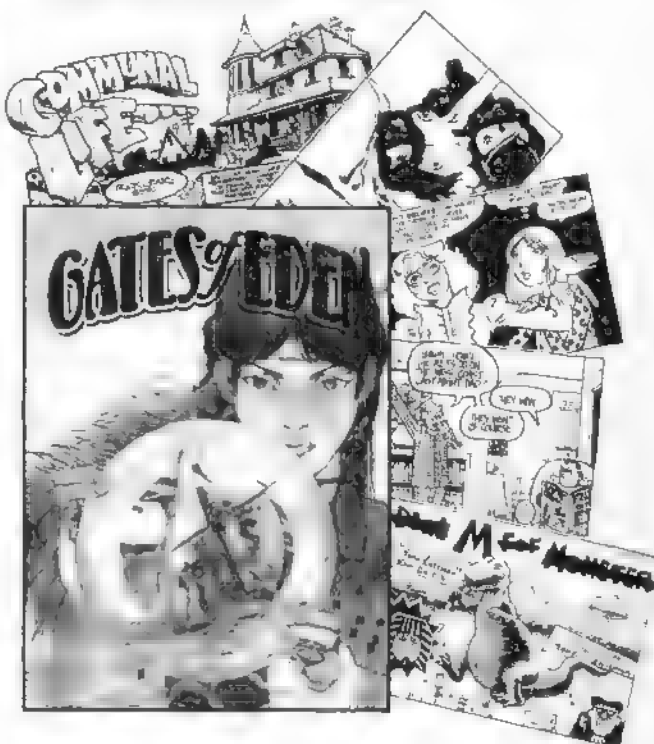
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- "Chicago '68" is Spain's experiences at the Chicago convention riots.
- "I Was a Teenage Met Fan" is Fred Hembeck's story about the year the Mets won the World Series.
- "Nowhere to Run" is Sharon Rudahl's story about illegal abortions during the '60s.
- Steve Lalaloa's personal account of the Rolling Stones' Altamont Festival tragedy
- Kim Dietch's "Dial 'M' for Monster" concerns a home movie he and his brother Simon made as teenagers.
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- "Massage Muddle" is a Pudge strip by Lee Marrs.
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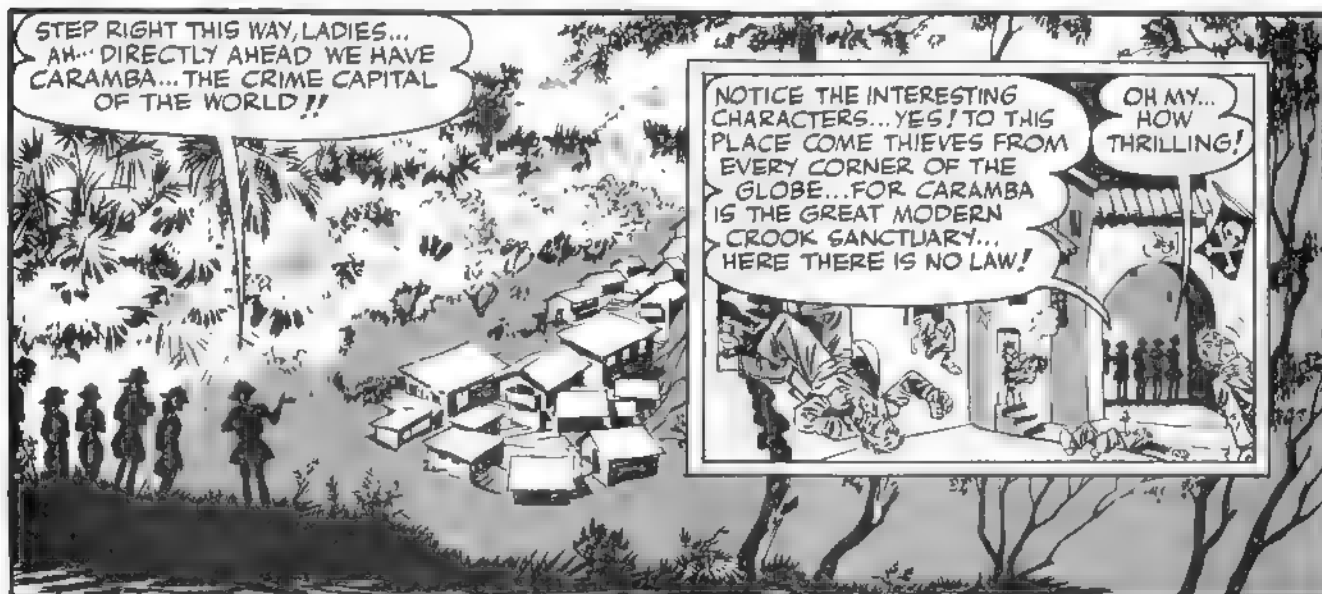
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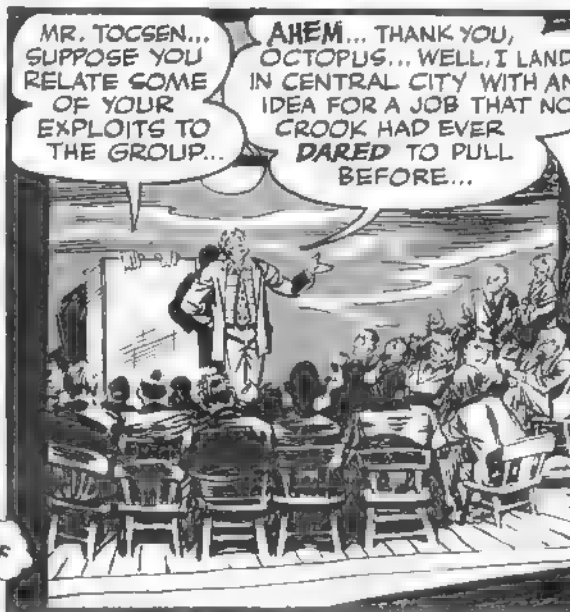
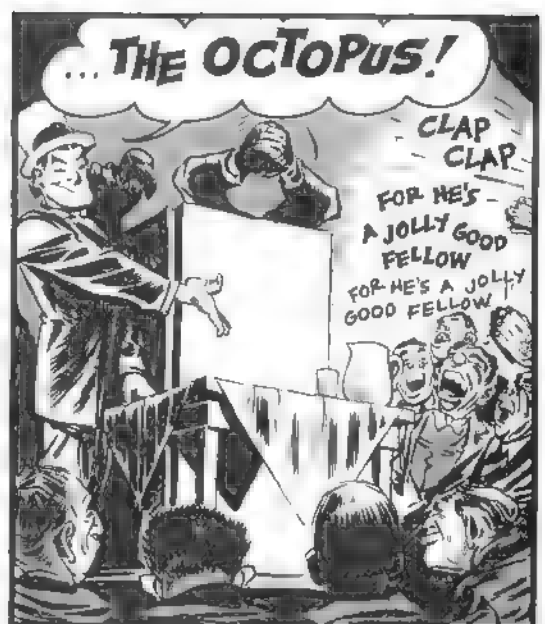
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CARAMBA!

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..IT HAS LONG BEEN THE AMBITION OF US ALL TO OUTWIT THE SPIRIT. WELL... I DID IT!

...I PICKED MY SPOT CAREFULLY... POLICE HEADQUARTERS, CENTRAL CITY!! AND I WAITED...HEH HEH- THEN, ONE AFTERNOON... YOUNG EBONY WHITE EMERGED..ALONE!.. I MOVED IN...

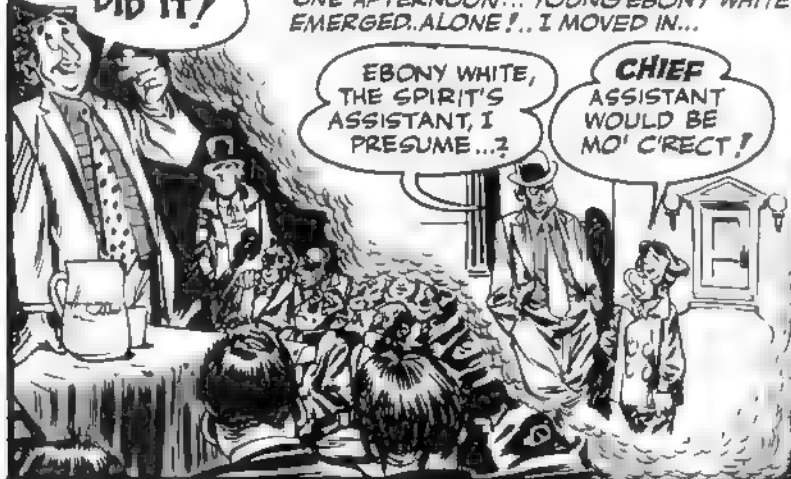
EBONY WHITE, THE SPIRIT'S ASSISTANT, I PRESUME...?

CHIEF ASSISTANT WOULD BE NO' C'RECT!

THE REST WAS ABSURDLY SIMPLE ..

ALL RIGHT NOW, KID...WE'VE GOT THE SPIRIT ON THE PHONE... TELL HIM WHAT I COACHED YOU TO SAY...

NO AH WON'T! MIST' SPIRIT. DON'T DO NUFFIN' HE ASTS! WE'RE AT 125 WATERFRONT STREET! COME QUICK!



Y'R LITTLE PAL THINKS HE'S TOUGH, SPIRIT...BUT IF YOU WANT TO SEE HIM ALIVE, YOU'D BETTER GET UP \$50,000..

AND MY CRIMINAL RECORD, NOW IN POLICE FILES!

..AT HEADQUARTERS, THE GREAT CRIMEFIGHTER WAS A PRETTY WORRIED MAN.. HAW HAW HAW..

I'LL AGREE, MR TOCSEN.. BUT IF YOU SO MUCH AS SCRATCH THAT BOY...I'LL GET YOU, AND...

HAW... I'LL LIVE UP TO ME BARGAIN ...I'LL BE AT HEADQUARTERS IN TEN MINUTES...

Cre:★!! KLINK..GET A PATROL CAR.. WE'LL TEACH THAT WISE GUY A LESSON!

HA HA .. I EVEN OUTWITTED CRAFTY OLD COMMISSIONER DOLAN...FOR EVEN THOUGH THE PATROL CAR GOT TO MY HIDEOUT IN FIVE MINUTES, THERE WAS NO TRACE OF ME.... OR EBONY...

NOT A TRACE... WHAT COULD HE HAVE DONE WITH THE KID?

Cre:★!! GONE!

BACK TO HEAD-QUARTERS, MEN!



THE COPS RETURNED TO HEADQUARTERS IN TIME TO FIND ME GETTING THE PAYOFF...

HERE'S YOUR MONEY, AND THE POLICE FILE TOO.. NOW, WHERE'S EBONY??

HERE'S THE KEY... YOU'LL GET HIM BACK UNHARMED.. JUST GIVE ME A 24-HOUR HANDICAP!

..AND WHILE DOLAN'S COPS WATCHED EVERY EXIT FROM CENTRAL CITY. I NEATLY FLEW SOUTH BY PRIVATE PLANE!

HOW COME THE SPIRIT DIDN'T DOUBLECROSS YA AN' SLUG YA ONNA SPOT?

Y'GOTTA ADMIT THE SPIRIT IS AN HONORABLE MAN..EVEN WHEN HE'S SORE.

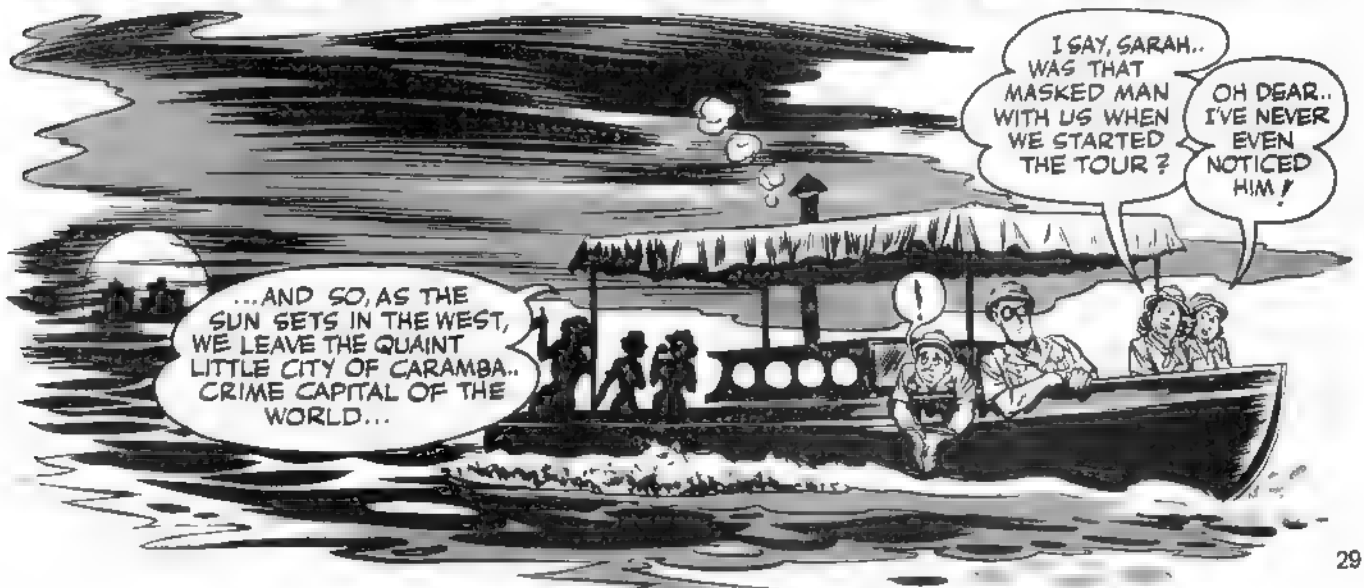
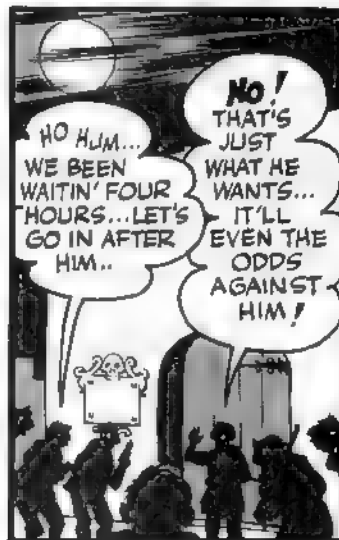
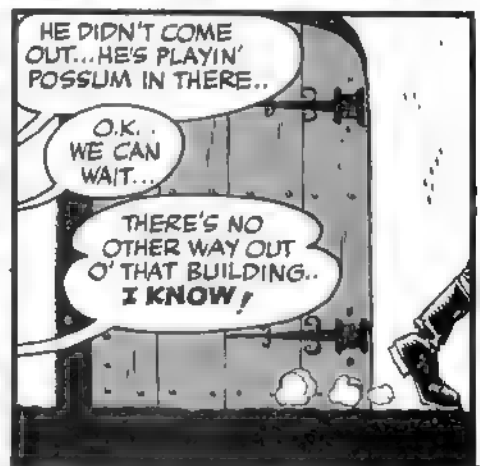
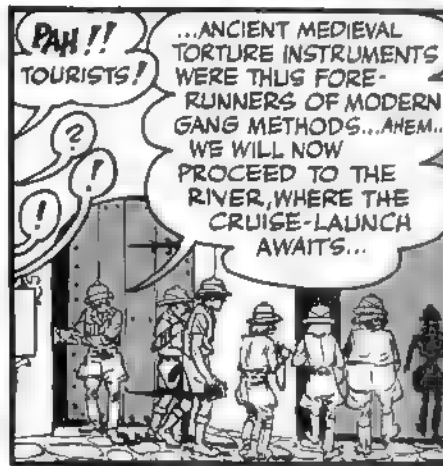
WHERE'D YA HIDE LITTLE EBONY?



HAW HAW.. WAIT'LL I TELL YA...HA HA HA..









MILTON CANIFF

PART ONE

Milton Caniff, like Will Eisner, is one of those rare pioneer cartoonists who managed to retain control of his creative property. His first big success came with Terry and the Pirates, which began in 1934. But the Chicago Tribune-N.Y. News Syndicate refused Caniff's wishes to own his own characters. Field Enterprises lured Caniff with an offer to own his own strip, along with a substantial raise. So Caniff jumped to this syndicate with his new creation, Steve Canyon, in 1947. Caniff, now in his mid-seventies, still draws this popular strip. Caniff's powerful story-telling and drawing technique influenced many other cartoonists, among them Will Eisner. Eisner interviewed his old friend in February 1982 at the Princeton Club (New York, not Wisconsin). The first half of this "Shop Talk" follows. The second part will run in our next issue.

WILL EISNER: So, we're in the studio ... with our feet up and we've just washed the brushes... and we're talking [laughter]. I wonder, Milt, how much "shop talk" goes on now? People seem too widely separated now. I learned a lot by talking, comparing...

MILTON CANIFF: Of course you do. You find out things about the business that way.

EISNER: I remember in my studio back in 1941... there were five of us then. We did a lot of that. I was still working with Japanese brushes—they were 3 or 4 cents then. Cheap!—and Lou Fine also used 'em. He was by far the best draftsman in the shop. Well, anyhow, Lou and I would start talking about line and inking and how the Japanese print art related to comics. Pretty soon the others would join in and soon, like two local bullies hand-

wrestling, one of us would draw a long line and the idea was for the other to go over it without appreciably thickening it until one or the other would waver his line. I usually lost and bought the beers [laughter] but it was a great learning process.

Let's start with a very basic concept. We are dealing with a medium that is irrevocably and interactively composed of words and pictures. Are you in agreement with me on that?

CANIFF: Yes, and you've got to have something to say.

EISNER: Okay. Now, what is your method, your style of working? Mostly your work is daily strips, is that right?

CANIFF: Well, it works a little differently for me because I have to tie up a daily strip and a Sunday page.

EISNER: Are they connected? The daily

Steve Canyon



and the Sunday?

CANIFF: They're connected. They read straight through seven days a week, or they must be readable from Monday to Saturday, or they must be readable from Sunday to Sunday. So the bookkeeping is pretty heavy.

EISNER: All right.

CANIFF: And a Sunday page because it's done so much further ahead in time, sets the tone, and sets the plot, not just the tone. And I try to define the end of the story first because that way you've got a goal to work toward. My approach is that you have a goal to work toward, but also you have set yourself a time box. You've got to get things said that lead up to that Sunday page when you come back later—a Sunday page ten weeks ahead, for instance, and daily strips, five or six, whichever you can manage. But they still have to match between the last week's Sunday page and next week's Sunday page.

EISNER: How many weeks does your story usually run?

CANIFF: Fortunately, I finally decided to stop worrying about that. I used to go for two months—say ten weeks—and then I realized that sometimes I was chopping it off. If I had a good thing going it seemed a shame to chop it off just because it was ten weeks, so I started letting it run its course. I still haven't gone beyond thirteen or fourteen weeks, or very rarely have, but I don't feel constrained. EISNER: When I was doing a daily strip six to ten weeks seemed to be almost a requirement of the syndicate salesman. CANIFF: Yes.

EISNER: I suspected later as I became a little bit more sophisticated that they felt that they were going to get a cancellation [laughter]. They could avoid hard feelings with a paper if they could break it off at a point where the editor would feel that they could cancel, so...

CANIFF: By the way, in that respect — and this is something that has annoyed me over the years — a newspaper will ask a syndicate to tell them when a story ends so they can cancel. They don't always say they're going to cancel, but you don't want them to ask those questions.

EISNER: Yes, that's right, that's right [groan].

CANIFF: Now it always seemed to me only fair play for them to stop the strip right in the middle of a sequence so if there are going to be any protests, you'll get the protests. Who's going to protest after a sequence ends? Why should they? But in the middle of it, if the reader is held and entertained they'll say, "Where's whoever?" or "What ever happened to so-and-so?"

EISNER: Yeah, yeah... but it rarely happened.

CANIFF: It's only fair to the cartoonist to give him that kind of break, but they seldom do.

EISNER: Well, I found from my own syndicate experience that this business is very

corrosive in many ways to a cartoonist. I don't know if you've had this experience, but one initially enters the syndicate strip business with a new idea and a fresh approach and a fresh personality. And your strip becomes widely bought. A year or two later, being the inventive person you are, you want to add new things and do new things and then your hand is stayed because they say, "Now wait a minute. We bought you for this particular strip. We want you to be what you were when we bought you. We don't want you to be anybody else." And suddenly you find yourself just turning knobs [laughter] and the machine is just turning, turning. Did you experience this? Have you gotten that?

CANIFF: Well, yes. Fortunately for me, when I stopped doing *Terry and the Pirates* and started *Steve Canyon* I was able to get the kind of contract which gives me the final cut, as they say in the movie business. I haven't had that problem as much recently as I used to have with *Terry*, especially when the war was going on because the overtone of propaganda was there and had to be there and should have been there. But propaganda can be handled in so many ways. It can be cheap and shoddy and offhand and Jerry-come-lately, or it can be most persuasive in times of emergency. It's not the kind of yelling "fire" in a crowded theater that you...

EISNER: No, no. I know what you mean. You were working on presenting a point of view. More intellectual than...

CANIFF: Yes, exactly.

EISNER: "Point of view," depending on who it comes from and why, is different than propaganda.

CANIFF: Oh yes, yes it is.

EISNER: By the way, do you know that Mao Tse-tung used comics widely in his early days?

CANIFF: I've seen some drawings that were very heavy-handed and although the Chinese generally are very good with graphics they were just falling for their own line; his line. Of course, nobody was going to talk back to the big man. But they had very often the overtone that the boss did it. The publisher wrote the book. EISNER: Yeah. That of course was "the word." So... you start with the end of the story, so to speak. You know how it is going to end, where you want to go...

CANIFF: Let me interrupt here a moment. EISNER: Sure.

CANIFF: You set it up and let it be as fragile as needs to be because, for instance, in the case of right in the middle of the story [incoming fan] letters indicate they know how it's going to come out. They've out-guessed me! So then I can still switch the ending and cross them up.

EISNER: I see. So, by being loose as you go, you can alter your course when you sense you're becoming too obvious.

CANIFF: And it works that way as long as I'm not too deeply into the Sunday series; I can still do a switch on the end. It makes

me look smart as hell [laughter].

EISNER: Arthur Miller, in an interview some time ago, said that he likes to set up characters and let them go... and follow them where they go, as they develop themselves so to speak.

CANIFF: Yes, exactly.

EISNER: In *Life On Another Planet*, I found that it worked that way for me. Create a situation where they're going to go ultimately, but set them up and follow them rather than direct them. Let them react to events you impose.

CANIFF: Yes, throw up all of the red herrings and the things that are necessary.

EISNER: Well now, since we're talking about a continuing set of characters like *Steve Canyon*, your plots do take on a kind of similarity, do they not? Or are they violently different?

CANIFF: No, the plot structure is similar enough, but you change the pace as much or as little as you choose. For instance, essentially my kind of thing is: hang him on the cliff and get him off the cliff.



Terry and the Pirates (1935)

EISNER: You mean a basic line

CANIFF: Or boy meets girl, boy loses girl, boy gets girl.

EISNER: Uh huh... Fundamental?

CANIFF: The most fundamental. Not only the soundest but the most endlessly used of course. And this can be employed whether it's a love story or not; it's still true.

EISNER: Do I understand that to mean you superimpose a problem over a boy-meets-girl frame?

CANIFF: Yes, well, to give you a for instance... This is something that I'm going into right now or maybe I should get back to. I had a character named Raven Sherman when I was doing *Terry and the Pirates* who began as a very austere teacher — a missionary-type teacher — but a teacher. She had her hair pulled back starched, proper — oh, Katharine Hepburn in *The African Queen*. In the beginning she was one person and then in the ending she was another. And the total result of this is that the basic script was that she was like this: 31

she was doubtful, then she capitulated to the guy, and then she went back to being herself again you assumed. Now, this gives you the opportunity to switch that ending and make her not what you assume. So, time gives you that privilege.

EISNER: Uh huh. I see what you mean here.

CANIFF: But sometimes when you start you don't. You think you know the payoff and you've established an ending, but it's very comfortable and it can be made to switch and fool the reader, because I think it is true that readers like to be fooled.

EISNER: Oh, readers love surprises. Also, they don't like to be disappointed, but they do want to be surprised.

CANIFF: It isn't just the whodunit kind of murder mystery.

EISNER: Well, in that frame, let me ask you about something that has troubled me all these years, but you have always seemed to have had really no trouble with it — "Claustrophobia." A daily strip to me is like trying to conduct an orchestra in a telephone booth. On *The Spirit* dailies I always seemed to wind up choked up because I have so much to say in any one strip.

CANIFF: Yes...

EISNER: And I'll either go tight and say nothing, which is disastrous and stupid, or say too much, which is equally as stupid. Have you ever felt the daily strip closing in on you as a form? And how do you deal with it?

CANIFF: Well, when I first started, I'd been doing a daily strip for the Associated Press called *Dickie Dare*, which had no Sunday page so I didn't have to worry about that. It just jumped from Friday to Monday and that was that. But once into the Sunday page thing, which had to mesh, I was facing a problem with Mollie Slott, who at that time was the editor of the Chicago Tribune-New York News Syndicate. She said, "Why don't you ask some of the old boys who've been at it awhile and see what they do." So, I wouldn't have dreamed of asking Harold Gray or even Chester Gould, who was not all that new — he'd been around for a couple of years at this point — but, anyhow, I wrote a letter to Harold Gray, and waited for the blow to fall of no answer or a negative answer or a nasty something. Instead I got a four-page single-spaced typewritten letter from Harold saying various things, but this in particular: On Monday morning, any given Monday, I have to use at least one panel to recapitulate the week-end thing which has all been in the Sunday page. And then another panel to conjecture on what I might have been able to do with whatever the dilemma is. And in the last panel you advance the strip; in other words, you use something you had not used in the Sunday page. Maybe the first two incidents which you view from a different point of view. There's a fight in the Sunday page, for instance. You see

that fight. On Monday two guys will say, "Hey, did you see those two guys fighting over there?" Well, you've told exactly the same story over again from another point of view. And a perfectly legitimate thing is that gimmick-wise, in the last panel you have the door open and in comes the man with the gun. Then you're off into Tuesday, you're off and running.

EISNER: Well, how much story did he say that leaves you? He leaves you one panel to develop your plot?

CANIFF: Again, it's more a matter of what your plot is going to be. In other words, in the Raymond Chandler thing of the door opens and there's the man with the gun. That's all you need to start a mystery story.

EISNER: That's true, but...

CANIFF: Well, in effect, that's what he was doing here. That one panel is enough to suck you into tomorrow. Then tomorrow is all going to be new gravy. Now, you may have needed the second panel just because he missed yesterday's Sunday paper. But surely you need that last panel because he doesn't know what's going on out there in the hall or what's going to happen when the door opens and admits the man with the gun. That panel is usually enough to hold the audience and to advance the story. Then on Tuesday you can jump around any way you want to, assuming the reader is with you.

EISNER: Well, do you work in that frame...today?

CANIFF: Essentially, I still do it.

EISNER: Do I understand, Milt, that you start with a total view of a story? Okay, so let's just fabricate a plot from the man with the gun who enters the room and deal with it, okay?

CANIFF: Yes.

EISNER: In that plot you know that for the next two weeks you're going to have a running account of a man who is behind the door with a gun. He's a hit man from Chicago, let's say, and he's here to get, to kill this guy who turns out to be a sleuth himself. And through some sort of mistaken identity they think — and the guy from Chicago thinks — he's another hood. Okay, that's the essential theme of that plot. How many weeks or days do you deal with something as explanatory as that?

CANIFF: The exposition is not really very necessary when you're showing this very graphic thing of a man with a gun. That's enough. He doesn't have to say he's got a gun; he's got a gun. It may be a phony, but he's got a gun or you think he has. And you can make it turn any way you want. This is where I jump to the end of the story and make everything that happens after that incident, whatever path it takes, lead to that culmination.

EISNER: Lead to that killing culmination?

CANIFF: It's awful to kill off bad guys because you hate to get rid of anybody if you've got a really good one.

EISNER: [laughter]

CANIFF: You know Chet Gould never does that, or if he does, the death is so questionable that it's harder...

EISNER: [laughter] Bring him back...

CANIFF: So you can bring him back: "Poof!"

EISNER: I have problems with villains myself. I've never been able to see a villain as absolute! Always in the back of my mind I say, "I bet he's good to his mother." [laughter]

CANIFF: Well, I think your self-criticism is sound and I don't know exactly how to categorize it because when something is unfinished it's unfinished; you have to pick up the story line and so forth.

EISNER: True.

CANIFF: But the reader gets very clever. Some of these readers will do anything to keep from being made fools of themselves.

EISNER: Uh huh.

CANIFF: It's not their favorite thing.

EISNER: So now we have a fair concept of what you do for a story. By the way, do you, when you have a story idea for your next ten or fifteen weeks, do you first rough it out? What are the mechanics?

CANIFF: As I go along in the beginning of the story, I'm cranking up sometime before the story begins, stockpiling places and events or cross reference events, referrals, something that actually happened. Naturally I'm going to be dealing in fictitious characters, but I want to have done a little homework between — sometimes — just me and the ceiling. I think this girl would be vulnerable to soft music, or I think she'd go out of her mind if she were invaluable. She wants to be free...

EISNER: Let's go back and talk about your actual technique. What about pen and ink and style? Just to make it fast and easy, why don't you go through the current procedure. You know, you write the story and...

CANIFF: Yes. The way I'm working now, unlike the old days when I used to letter in pencil right on the drawing paper, is to take ordinary foolscap and lay it out as if it were strips. Two to a page of foolscap. I divide that into panels of three each and start writing it then exactly the same way except roughly this time because I'm going to dictate this over the telephone to Shel Dorf in San Diego. In doing so I've got to be able to change pace in the middle of it. If I realized that I've said something I didn't want to say or I want to add a word I can just make a note to myself as I go along. Then he only gets what I want him to hear. He takes it down in a kind of comic shorthand.

EISNER: What's that? [laughter]

CANIFF: And he's a very fast lettering man. In other words, I can dictate this to him — as I did just yesterday — six strips and a Sunday page, and he will have it lettered and in the mail that same afternoon

STEVE CANYON

ALTON CANTIFF

OH, BABY! MY RESPECT FOR CAPTAIN BLIGH INCREASES EVERY MINUTE!

ROBINSON CRUSOE WAS LUCKY! HE DIDN'T HAVE A FEVER-HAPPY STRONG WOMAN ON BOARD! WOW! MY RUDDER HAS TORN LOOSE !..

I'LL NEVER AGAIN SPEAK HARSHLY ABOUT A ROUGH AIRPLANE ENGINE IF I LIVE TO GET BACK BEHIND ONE...

FORTUNATELY FOR STEVE THE BOAT LURCHES —

I'M SORRY, DUCHESS, BUT WHEN YOU COME TO YOU'LL BE OUT OF MY CLASS! REVERSING THIS LIFE-VEST WILL MAKE A TEMPORARY KIND OF STRAIT JACKET!

GOTTA RIG A STEERING OAR BEFORE WE SWAMP!

DRIVEN RUDDERLESS BEFORE THE RAGING STORM, THE BOAT HAS NOW SWUNG BROADSIDE TO THE WIND — IT RISES WITH A HUGE WAVE — THEN ...

3/3 IT IS THAT MOMENT PEOPLE ALWAYS TALK ABOUT! — YOUR ENTIRE PAST LIFE PASSES THROUGH YOUR MIND WHEN YOU THINK YOU ARE ABOUT TO DIE!



Steve Canyon's stepson is slowly drowning in a rare one panel daily which is not a holiday strip. (March 3, 1982)

by air express so it will be back here the following morning.

EISNER: Well, then...you get it back with balloons already on the board, on the Strathmore, or whatever board you use.

CANIFF: He just rules it up so he can anticipate what I want. Sometimes I want a single panel with no smaller panels at all, just one great big panel as on New Year's Day, Christmas Day, something of that sort.

EISNER: Oh, yeah.

CANIFF: And when he letters—left-handed, by the way, which I don't see how he does...

EISNER: Well, you draw left handed, don't you?

CANIFF: Uh huh. And my lettering is terrible, as most left-handed people's lettering is. Yet there are many left-handed people in this business. George Wunder is left-handed, as is Bill Mauldin.

EISNER: Oh, I didn't know that.

CANIFF: Irv Moore was left-handed.

EISNER: Really?

CANIFF: Uh huh. Good lettering men too.

EISNER: Leonardo da Vinci was left-handed. [laughter]

CANIFF: Of course, of course. But having to push the pen in lettering has always been a problem. Even back in high school, in mechanical drawing class, it was a real handicap to me. And as a result, I've always been a little gun-shy of lettering. I can do it, but I just don't want to do it. I hate to do it. Did it for a long time before I could afford a lettering man.

EISNER: Well, join the club. I think most of us hate lettering. Currently I do most of my own lettering because of the kind of story... and treatment. It means the lettering and art must be handed by the same person.

CANIFF: Yeah, I guess so. In any case, I can do it. I can always fake it if I have to. And sometimes I do, for instance, when it comes back from Shel. I send it right on to Dick Rockwell because I've written whatever notes I'm going to make. Sometimes it's just a stage direction word background, "storm at sea," for instance.

That's all I have to tell Dick, who then really lays out the strip in tight pencil.

Then it comes back to me and I finish it, and I'm the last one to see it. The final cut, so to speak. And in the interim time I can change it around if I don't like what Dick has pencilled or I want to change it. I seldom dislike what he pencils because he's very good. It's just that I change my mind sometimes.

EISNER: Is he related to Norman?

CANIFF: Yes, he's Norman's nephew.

EISNER: Oh, all right.

CANIFF: His father was Norman's brother, Jarvis Rockwell.

EISNER: Oh, I see.

CANIFF: Who was also an artist, by the way. Designer, I should say. He designed childrens' toys.

EISNER: Really? I didn't know that.

CANIFF: So Dick grew up almost in the shadow of Norman, which is unfortunate in that people always equate him with Norman. He's very good on his own, but he doesn't paint the way Rockwell—Norman Rockwell—did, or anything else. He's his own man.

EISNER: How long has Dick Rockwell been working on your stuff?

CANIFF: Twenty years now.

EISNER: On your work? Oh, I didn't know it was as long as that.

CANIFF: Just after the war. He was a pilot in the European Theatre and when he came back he was freelancing, doing comic books and that kind of thing. And he lived down the road from me in Rockland County.

EISNER: Uh huh.

CANIFF: One day he brought some samples to my studio and said he was too busy one week and not busy at all the next, and if I had anything that I needed done that he would be available probably. So I asked him to do a couple of sample things cold turkey. He did and they were very good. He'd never drawn a strip.

EISNER: Uh huh. There's a considerable difference in panel treatment... composition.

CANIFF: Dick had always worked in a page form. I need that too, of course...

EISNER: So, he pencils tightly then, right? Reasonably tightly?

CANIFF: Right. Then I do a pencil of a situation, for instance, which I can't des-

cribe in one sentence [laughter]—hand written or lettered is too loose. What I need is what he supplies. I've always been a very sloppy penciller and only in very tight facial situations and so on have I pencilled this tightly. I actually almost pencil with a brush, you know?

EISNER: Well, I understand. There's an advantage to it because you know what you're doing and you get a freedom of flow of movement. When it's very tight you're tracing rather than drawing.

CANIFF: That's exactly it. And sometimes I intensify a situation—where I have the guy running down the road, for instance, to escape the bad guys. Dick will draw it correctly and very well, but I want to intensify it; I want to make him look more scared. So I'll bend him over a little more and put him in a position of intense effort instead of just a jogging kind of scene.

EISNER: Well, then, actually Dick Rockwell will compose the panels too.

CANIFF: Yeah.

EISNER: And you'll get back something that you can alter if you wish. Isn't that what you're saying?

CANIFF: Yeah, that's what it all comes down to. But I don't have to do it very often because he's so good, especially after this many years.

EISNER: Sure, yeah.

CANIFF: But every now and then there will be something that I had in mind to be more "something else" than what he does and it's just a simple matter of changing it.

EISNER: Yeah.

CANIFF: And, by the way, every once in a while, quite deliberately, not just to pick up time—although it helps the schedule—I'll just block out a Sunday page or a whole set of strips and do them all myself. It's like a hostess, you know, will sleep in her guest room once in a while.

EISNER: Yeah. Yeah, right. In other words you can't keep your hand out of the soup, so to speak. [laughter]

CANIFF: Well, I'll say you don't want to lose your touch either.

EISNER: I think that's very important; I agree with you.

CANIFF: And doing it from cold scratch

is the only way to find out...

EISNER: Yes, yes, yes.

CANIFF: It isn't a matter of picking an easy one! [laughter]

EISNER: Well, let me interrupt because this brings up something I've been wanting to ask you. I've spent a lot of time in recent years—now I use myself here because I'm the only comparison I have—I find myself more and more concerned about composing a panel, that is, staging. I know you and I have talked about our theatrical background. I was hardly theatrical but I'm interested in the theatre and I mentioned to you about my early life with my father doing back sets and stage sets, and you were of course involved in college and amateur theater. I think professional too, weren't you?

CANIFF: Well, just as I could grab a job as a super in downtown professional companies while I was in college and high school.

EISNER: Well, anyway, what I'm trying to get at is that I regard the panel as a stage.

CANIFF: Uh huh. So do I.

EISNER: And I move the furniture, the elements, around... until I get the story told. I spend a lot of time arranging my characters. I literally compose a panel. Now, do you feel the same way? Do you do the same thing?

CANIFF: Oh definitely. And, also, we're saddled with one problem—I don't know if you have to do this or not—I draw for third color page size because that's the greatest number of clients I have. Sunday, that is. But about three inches from the bottom, I always have to keep expendable—about two and a half inches, actually—which means this is where they're going to cut it off for tabloid size and that one half of standard page, one quarter size. Real postage stamp stuff, which is annoying as hell.

EISNER: I know. It's terrible. I had to deal with this in *The Spirit* sections... drew for both tabloid and small comic book page. I don't have that problem now...

CANIFF: However, for composition I will often add a whole thing down there that I know is going to be cut out and thrown away in a lot of papers. But, still, I can't stand seeing it just sloughed off.

EISNER: Well, Milt, does that mean you are laying out or composing each of these panels as much for the purpose of the newspaper as for clarity and the fact that it's coming down to a postage stamp, as it is for story telling?

CANIFF: Yes, that's the function every day, every minute of every day.

EISNER: Well, let's get into pen and ink. As students always ask, "What pen do you use?" As a matter of fact, I recall going down to the *New York American* looking for a job and I went into the bullpen there and the first question I asked the old timers was, "What pen do you



James Montgomery Flagg: painterly drawing technique. (May 1916)

use?" somehow thinking mystically that if I get the right pen I'll draw like him.

[laughter]

CANIFF: There's one thing about it on the negative side. If you want to draw a given way, if you like the line work that James Montgomery Flagg did, it's a good idea to use his pen. [laughter] And maybe that's not for you. I found this out and I'm sure you did too. I was using a 290 or something like that and I found the crow quill 659 was a better pen for me because it was stronger. It was not quite as resilient or soft.

EISNER: I started out with a 290 and it was a very soft pen.

CANIFF: I still don't know what James Montgomery Flagg used.

EISNER: I think he used that.

CANIFF: He probably did because you couldn't get lines like that unless you did.

EISNER: I think he did and I think [Charles Dana] Gibson before him.

CANIFF: Yes.

EISNER: He used a soft...

CANIFF: He was always saddled with that Gibson thing.

EISNER: Well, they literally painted with those lines. You know it seemed to me like they were just prongs on a brush, so to speak.

CANIFF: What amazed me, and still does, is how they could hold that much ink that

long.

EISNER: Yes. Incredible.

CANIFF: Some of those lines were half-way down the page. A girl's hair which Gibson would draw curling down below her face seemed like one continuous line.

EISNER: There's just no going over those lines. I've seen those originals and you just didn't go over those lines, you just snapped them in.

CANIFF: And no white as I remember. I don't remember seeing any.

EISNER: That's right. That's right. They used razor blades for white-out. I remember, talking about my first job at the *New York American* newspaper, there was this old guy with a green visor sitting next to me. You know, an old grizzled old newspaper artist. I asked him about "tools" and he just picked up this razor blade—which he would also use to sharpen his pencil—and an art gum eraser and the crusted pen and he said, "Kid, these are the only tools you'll ever need!"

[laughter] He'd work on a hard surface, you know, on a plate-finish paper and razor blade errors off... Well, you use a pen to outline the figures, do you?

CANIFF: Not entirely. It depends on the time element, for one thing. If I'm lush with time, which is rare, I'll draw out a whole scene. But usually I have to take a brush full of ink and throw in the blacks, shadow side of the picture, whatever the



Charles Dana Gibson drawing (1903)



Bottom tier of Caniff's current Canyon continuity: the mugging of Looby McSump for Sunday, March 28, 1982.

incident pictured.

EISNER: Yeah.

CANIFF: Whether it's a person —day-light's a little tougher—at night you can use those wonderful things that you do with streetlamps over feet and hands.

[laughter]

EISNER: Yeah.

CANIFF: Show their feet by the shadows of the legs against the light of the street-lamp on the cobblestones. [laughter]

EISNER: Uh huh. Well I guess that's my way of dealing with city drama. You handle shadows beautifully as story-telling devices.

CANIFF: They are really part of the thing. I've got, for instance —to give you a "for instance"— which takes place at night on the beach on a Caribbean island and you see silhouettes of people, including the hero, who is tailgating this woman, thinking that she's going to be mugged. And the muggers come out of the bushes. All this is in silhouette. She's the one with the awful face

EISNER: [laughter] The one you're currently doing?

CANIFF: And the two muggers approach her from the rear and then, just at the moment they're about to pounce on her, she hears them coming. Of course, we know that she has a flashlight in her hand and she flashes the light on her face. You don't see her face but the muggers do and they run in horror.

EISNER: Oh, that's great!

CANIFF: It's all shadows except you see the edges of the light around her head. You're looking right into the flashlight; the bare bulb.

EISNER: Yeah, and then you see the faces of these characters, right?

CANIFF: No, they just run.

EISNER: Are these recent *Steve Canyon* sequences?

CANIFF: This is one I just did.

EISNER: A current *Steve Canyon*. Great. Real good.

CANIFF: Anyhow, to play up the fact that she has this horrible face which no-

body ever sees except the characters, they all say, "That horrible face!" But you don't know why it's horrible.

EISNER: Well, there you use blacks for story-telling, right?

CANIFF: Yeah.

EISNER: I recall the old *Terry* series... and your way of handling black, which really influenced me you know. I must tell you that when you were doing *Terry* —there's a little difference in our ages— I was in high school while you were out there in the major leagues.

CANIFF: Oh yes, yes. [laughter]

EISNER: And I was carefully watching what you did on *Terry*... My God, you know, I'm beginning to sound like a young fan that comes on saying, "When I was three years old you were a great cartoonist!" Oy!! [laughter] No, please don't accept this as adulation. [laughter]

CANIFF: I understand very well. L... [laughter]

EISNER: What I wanted to say is that you've used blacks in snow scenes where you drop the blacks on the paper with almost no outline.

CANIFF: I really stole that from Roy Crane.

EISNER: Oh, did you?

CANIFF: Oh, he was the best. When he

was kind of young he had a sequence once in the Alps and the foreground people were all cartoony as the dickens, the way he could draw cartoons...

EISNER: Uh huh.

CANIFF: ...the *Wash Tubbs* era. But the backgrounds, those mountains and the Alps were just magnificent. I don't think anybody has ever done them as well.

EISNER: I didn't remember. I thought you originated it. Well, okay...

CANIFF: What happens is you take it on from there.

EISNER: Well, of course. We all pick up where others leave off and make our own contribution.

CANIFF: When he did it, it was really almost decorative. When I do it, very often it's a practical application.

EISNER: Well, that's why I said you do it for the story. Just as I see a great difference between your work and [Noel] Sickles and yet you will constantly say,

"Well, Sickles did it first." But actually I see different values in it, just as I recognize different styles in anybody else.

Well, at any rate, in a round-about way we're getting back to the finished board. So, you use a pen and ink to outline the faces or the heads?

CANIFF: Well, to outline the light side of the thing.



Roy Crane: exotic backgrounds, cartoony characters in *Wash Tubbs* (1930).

EISNER: I see. You can go all the way down the figure with that pen then?

CANIFF: Well, you can if the circumstances call for it. For close-up drawing, of course, I use a pen, then come back in with a brush and do hairs especially. Blond hair is hard to do, simply because if you get too fine lines it will fade out in some papers. With a brunette, of course, it's much simpler to make the point with highlights. I have a tousled-haired girl, for instance, who's in a sequence I just finished, and it was fairly easy to slop in there with a brush and still just highlight on her bouncy hair. Then the next woman character is blonde with very fixed beauty salon type set hair where everything is exactly so.

EISNER: Uh huh.

CANIFF: The danger there is using a brush and getting it too thin, so I often use a pen.

EISNER: To hold the line?

CANIFF: Just to hold the line strong enough to reproduce it in Sheboygan.

EISNER: Well, I've been using, I've gone back to pen for backgrounds now. I use a hard, that is, an unresilient quill for backgrounds. I've suddenly rediscovered it again and I'm really enjoying it. I still prefer a brush for figures and I will use a brush for figures wherever I can.



Inking Pat, Terry, and Connie (1937)

CANIFF: Well, nobody does it better than you, by the way, because I was following you from the very first. That Philadelphia book, whatever it was, was the first time I saw your stuff and it was really...

EISNER: Well, it's nice to hear your memory's so good! [laughter]

CANIFF: Well, my young friend in Bryn Mawr, the one I told you about, the girl who made the book on the outcome of your stories...

EISNER: Well, it was a novelty when you

think about it. It was the first newspaper comic strip that was doing complete stories every week. No one had ever done that before.

CANIFF: Those kids ate it up, by the way. We've talked about this before: about how amused I've always been—and you have too—about ruining these kids' lives and here are these college kids drinking with a spoon and going down and stealing proofs at the *Bulletin*...

EISNER: Well, I never knew that. I wish I had known that then; I'd have demanded more attention from the syndicate! Well, let's get...

CANIFF: By the way, who was syndicating you at the time?

EISNER: Register and Tribune.

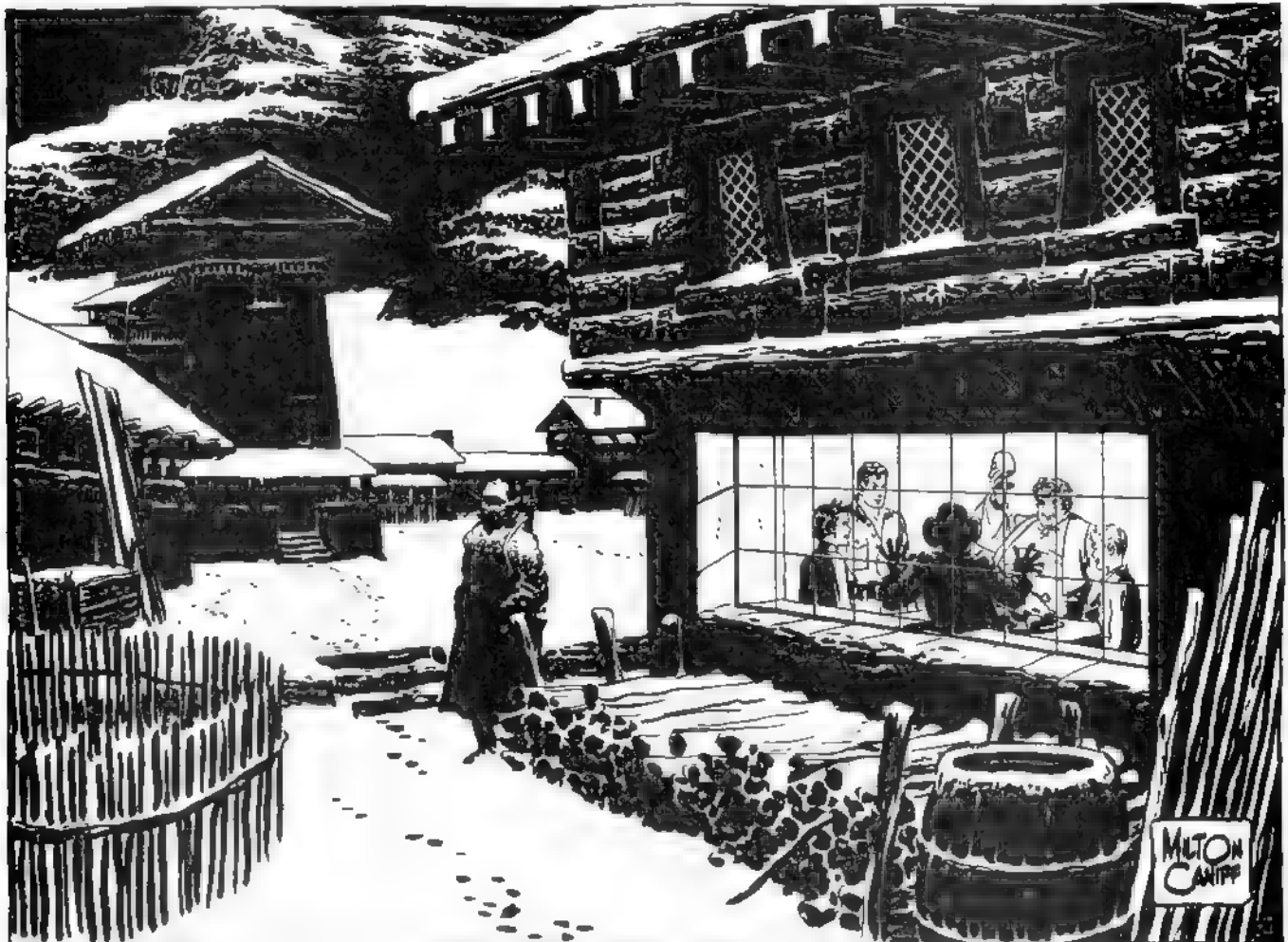
CANIFF: That was Register and Tribune?

EISNER: Yeah. That was Henry Martin then and later on Bruce Morton.

CANIFF: Uh huh. I'd forgotten.

EISNER: Yeah, and they were the syndicate of record all the way until 1951 and '52 when I dropped it. Actually, the complete-each-week story was *their* requirement, but no one had done it before. So that gave me, I guess, the historical advantage just by accident.

CANIFF: I think that's one of the things the kids liked, especially because I remem-



A 1939 Christmas card showcasing Caniff's powerful design sense and use of strong contrasts to suggest space.

ber following my kind of strips and I'd lose a day or two during the week and I'd lose the thread.

EISNER: Well, that's the reason I questioned you so closely about how you conduct a story because I still can't conceive in my mind that if you have panel one for recap and panel three or four is the cliff-hanger—I mean, you've got two panels left, it seems... My God, how can I tell a story in ten weeks or even twelve weeks in two panels a day? It just really almost seems impossible to get much of a story in ten or whatever number of weeks. Well, it's a totally different medium from comic books, isn't it?

CANIFF: Yeah, uh huh.

EISNER: I mean, a complete seven page story versus a story told in daily segments, you know...

CANIFF: I did it. In the early days when they didn't really go for the reprint comic books—we'd sort of run the course there—I wrote some original comic book pages, stories, complete...

EISNER: Did you really? When was this?

CANIFF: '50's I suppose.

EISNER: Oh, yeah, approximately...

CANIFF: It had to be that far back because we'd run through the reprints of the early *Canyons* and the kids weren't buying them as avidly as we thought they should. So we tried the original story thing and it worked. All of a sudden they didn't know how the story came out. They hadn't read it in the newspaper. And this was the reason for switching, but someone had to write this...

EISNER: So you had your teeth into some complete stories all at one...

CANIFF: In the beginning I did it all myself, but then it got to be just too much work and I had to delegate it then. But at least I learned how to do it. I learned the technique.

EISNER: Did you find it very different from the daily strips?

CANIFF: Oh yes, quite different. You stalled in different places for one thing. When you're doing it day by day you've got to... Capp described it best. He would take the beginning and the ending of a story and then put a string between them and hang baubles of incidents on the

string.

EISNER: That's Al Capp. Yeah.

CANIFF: Al Capp. Yeah.

EISNER: Oh, that was very well put. That was Al. He could say things like that. It's very, very, very apt.

CANIFF: I think that one of the things he failed to do, though, was to build his climaxes as effectively as he should have. He would get bored with a story after the first few weeks, then let it peter out. Not always, of course. He was a master of the other thing that we talked about, having this girl with the Veronica Lake hair-do and beautiful body and an awful face.

EISNER: Well, I think Al had a devilish streak in that he loved to shock. I think even more than you and I do or anybody else I know.

CANIFF: Yes, he did.

EISNER: In your work I don't see a desire for sense of shock more than I sense a desire for romance and atmosphere.

CANIFF: Yes.

EISNER: It has to do with personality, I guess. Capp—I can still hear him roaring with laughter. That leonine head would go back and he'd laugh out loud at his own stuff!

CANIFF: Yes, yes.

EISNER: Every time he talked with me, if he told me something funny, he was the first guy to laugh.

CANIFF: He'd start to laugh before he told it! [laughter]

EISNER: Yeah! [laughter]

CANIFF: He'd start when he thought of it.

EISNER: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

CANIFF: And in his broadcasting too.

EISNER: We've strayed from our discussion. So now, back to your strip. Rockwell has pencilled it, you have inked it and now what does it look like when it's finished? Do you... is it a very clean page or is it...?

CANIFF: I use a lot of detail, of course, so that it's a busy—almost without exception—a busy page. But it looks good to me if the drawing feels good.

EISNER: Uh huh.

CANIFF: I had a high school art teacher who said this is a very simple business. He said, "If it looks good, let it lie. And if it looks wrong, change it. And that's all you have to know."

EISNER: I had an anatomy teacher once say, "Don't worry about where the bones are. If it looks good, it's right." [laughter]

CANIFF: Exactly so. She the same teacher I told you about who would look at a drawing of mine, long after I was out of school, to see how much I had erased. If I hadn't erased enough, in other words, tried and failed and tried and failed, she didn't think I'd worked enough.

EISNER: That's an interesting point.

CANIFF: If I'd been someone who traced and then did my erasing on the tracing paper then... but she *knew* how I worked. She knew that I was...



Anatomy: "Don't worry about where the bones are. If it looks good, it's right." Burma (1937)

EISNER: That brings up an interesting question. There are artists who start drawing the top of the head, down the side of the nose and down right around. You know what I mean...

CANIFF: Sure, sure, sure.

EISNER: And other artists are busy running all over the page. I'm talking about pencilling. For example, I do a lot of constructing. My pencil is like a dancer. It just keeps moving around. I do a lot of probing in construction. How about you?

CANIFF: Well, first of all I use the same old armature, the thing that they had in the stick figure body to get action before the clay is applied in sculpturing. A guy is putting his arm around a girl, for instance. Have his hand come out where it should and not have too long an arm or too short an arm or whatever.

EISNER: Uh huh.

CANIFF: But especially on action type of stuff, and then just flesh it out. But I work all over the composition. I had a painting instructor in art school who said, "Work all over the canvas. Don't pick an eye or an ear or something. Get laid out first before you go back."

EISNER: You work with a hard pencil or a soft pencil?

CANIFF: 2H or 3H.

EISNER: Uh huh. I'll use a 2H to lay down a drawing if it's a toothy surface.

CANIFF: Sometimes if I'm in a big hurry to get some effect or I'm playing, I'll use a soft pencil and then it's a mess and it's hard to erase.

EISNER: You work on a plate finish paper or kid finish?

CANIFF: No, Kid finish. 3-ply kid finish



Al Capp self portrait



Self portrait of Caniff in 1944: "Stay with it, stay with it, stay with it."

Strathmore.

EISNER: A toothy surface.

CANIFF: I've used the same paper since I was in high school. I've tried everything else, of course, to find out whether it would work, and that was my bag.

EISNER: Well, the only originals I've seen of yours looked awfully clean. But somebody the other day told me they saw some of your work and it had a lot of white paint on it.

CANIFF: Yes, I've used more white paint recently.

EISNER: Yeah?

CANIFF: I never used to use white paint. In the first place, not because I didn't need it, but because the touch-up white they had in those days was not good enough.

EISNER: Yeah, it would chip. I use Rich Art poster white now.

CANIFF: You couldn't mark over it. It would chip, mush up and if anybody dropped a tear on it you'd have a mess. But in more recent times, I've found two reasons. One for speed and, secondly, certain effects that I want to get I can only get with white. And speed is the main rea-

son. I'll go through a whole set of strips, for instance, and just make a check mark above the head of a character that I want to change in some way. And if I've forgotten what it was I wanted to change I go back and I only have to think a minute or two to recall that the face is too long or too short or too wide.

EISNER: We are, after all, working for reproduction, not for a gallery exhibition.

CANIFF: Just one stroke of white along the edges of it and it'll be more of what I want. And I'm always fighting the clock. Always have been, but more so now, in recent times.

EISNER: Uh huh.

CANIFF: I've slowed up. That's what it comes down to.

EISNER: Well, I don't know whether we slow up. I think what we do is become more selective. I find myself being dissatisfied with the first effort.

CANIFF: Well, that too.

EISNER: Whereas before I was willing to go with the first shot. [laughter]

CANIFF: I used to work, for instance, consecutively through, just straight through. Stay with it, stay with it, stay with it. And my doctor finally told me two things: that my circulation is lousy, that you've got to get up and move around and take a break every ten minutes, a break at least every hour. The old army way. And, also, if you begin to feel eye weary, don't push it. Go lie down, take a nap or do something else. Go look out the window. I welcome it because it does make a difference. I can go through a whole night like that by knocking out a half hour some where along the line, take a nap, drink some coffee. I drink coffee all the time.

EISNER: Uh huh.

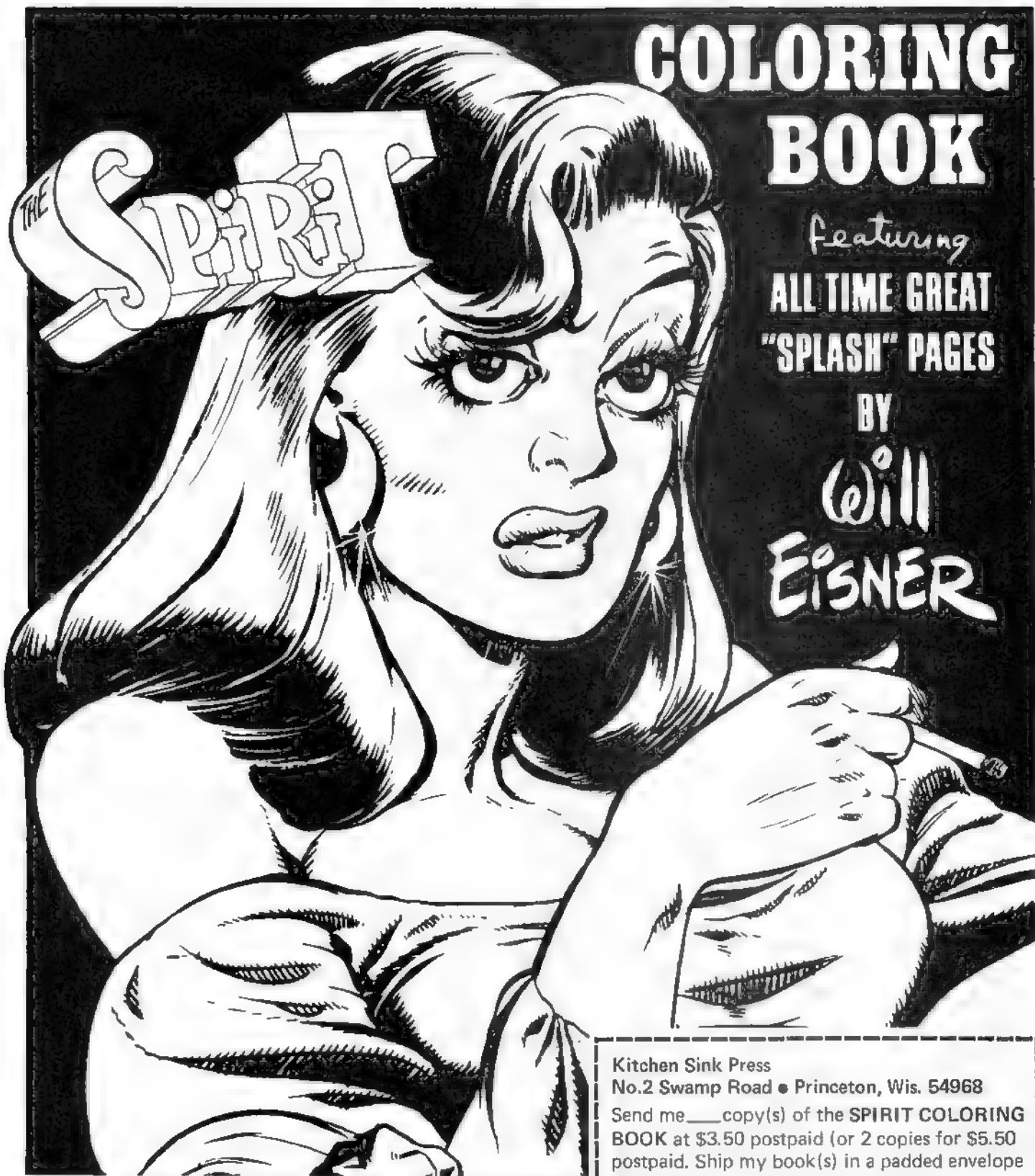
CANIFF: But do something else.

EISNER: Sounds like you were a disciplined worker.

CONTINUED IN THE SPIRIT No. 35...



A "circulation device" is offered at the end of these three panels from the September 24, 1947 daily of *Steve Canyon*



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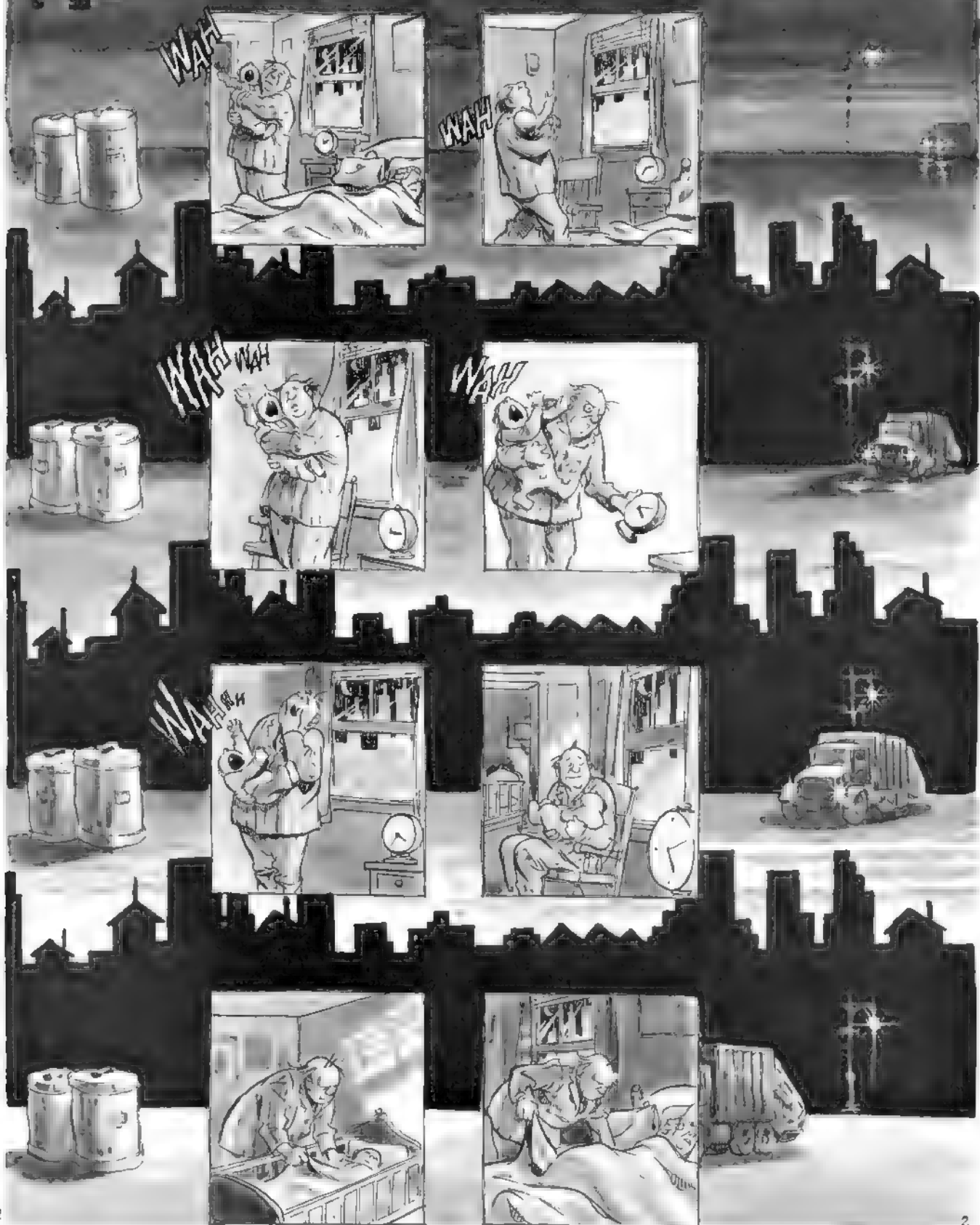
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GARBAGE

THE BIG CITY
IS AFTER ALL
A HIVE
OF CONCRETE AND STEEL
IN WHICH LIVING THINGS
SWARM,
DEPOSITING,
IN THE COURSE
OF THEIR LIVES,
THE RESIDUE
OF THEIR EXISTENCE
IN THE COUNTLESS
GARBAGE CANS
THAT SIT DUMBLY
AMID THE SWIRL.
BATTERED URS,
THE FINAL
REPOSITORY
OF YESTERDAY'S
STUFF.



CANS





CLANK



CLANK



DON'T FORGET
TO TAKE OUT
THE GARBAGE
DEAR!



TRASH

OH!!*
DAMN!
DAMN!
WHERE
IS
IT?



WHAT'S
THE
MATTER
CHARLIE?!
WHERE
IS
WHAT?

WELL,
Y'DIDN'T
THINK
I WAS SUCH
A 'NOTHING'
AT STUART!
...NOW,
WHERE
IS THAT
CAP,
HELEN
?!!



SO...
I WAS A
CHEER
LEADER AT
STUART...SO
WHAT DOES
THAT MEAN?
IT IS
FIFTEEN
YEARS
LATER
CHARLIE!

MY
BASEBALL
CAP!
THE ONE I
WORE
BACK IN
STUART
HIGH,
HELEN!



OH...
THAT
RATTY
SWEAT-
STAINED
CAP?
...UGH!!

...I
WAS
GOING
TO WEAR
IT FOR
THE
COMPANY
OUTING
SUNDAY
!



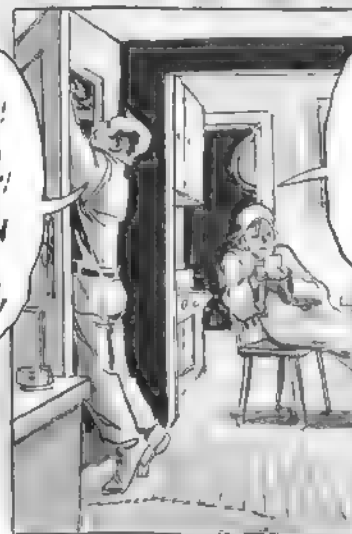
GROW
UP
CHARLIE!

ITS
MY LUCKY
CAP!!... I
WORE IT
WHEN I MADE
'ALL-CITY'... I
WORE IT
WHEN I
PITCHED A
NO-HITTER
TO WIN THE
BOROUGH
'PLAY
OFF'



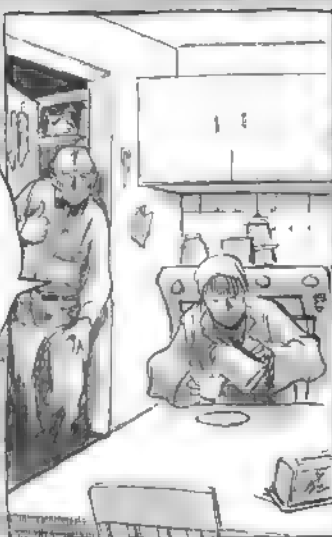
HA!
MY
BIG
SOCK
!!

ITS
GONE!!
...YOU
THREW
IT OUT!
YOU
THREW
IT
OUT,
HELEN!



GO TO
WORK
CHARLIE,
ITS
EIGHT
O'CLOCK
ALREADY

YOU
THREW
IT
OUT
!!



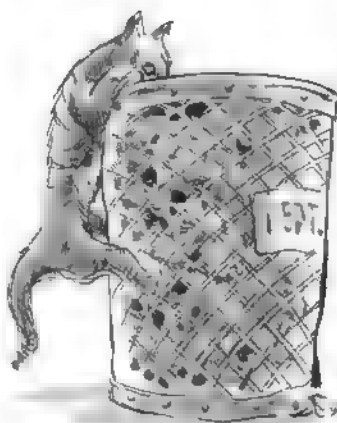
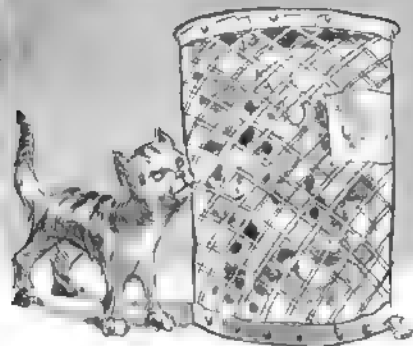
GO TO
WORK
CHARLIE



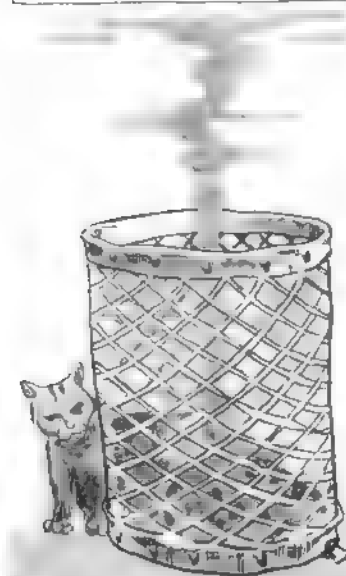
I DON'T
FEEL SO GOOD!
I'M TIRED,
MY FEET HURT...
MAYBE I
SHOULDN'T
CARRY SO
MANY SAMPLES!
THAT BAG
GETS HEAVIER
EVERY
DAY

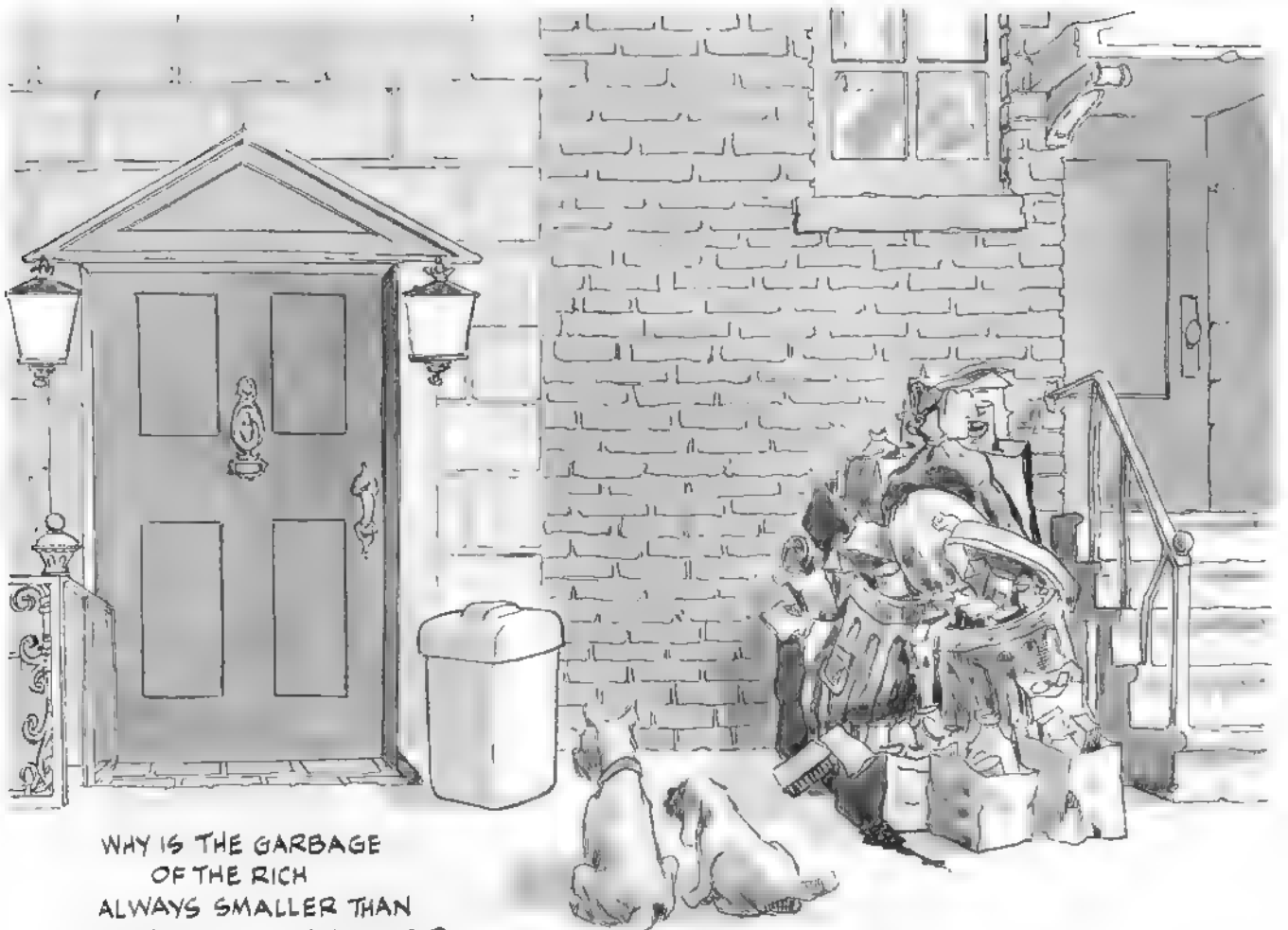


THE SOURCE





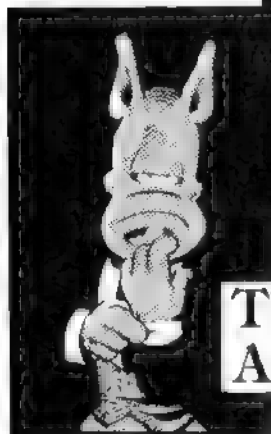




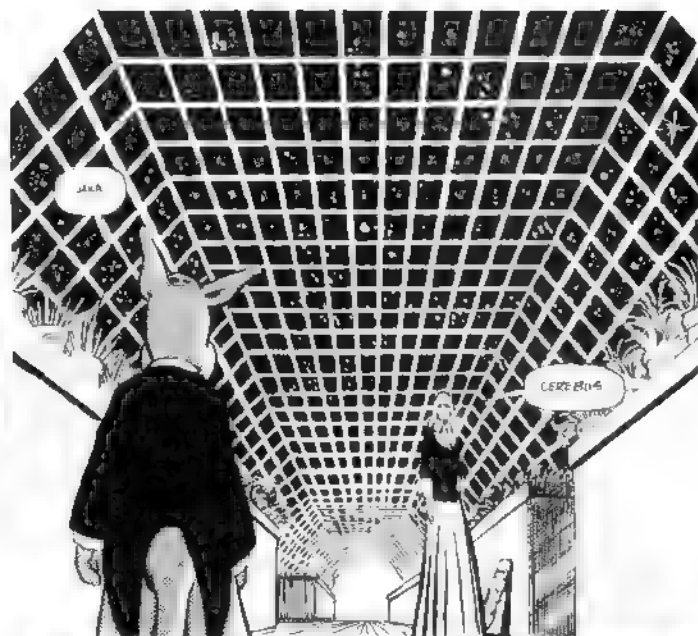
WHY IS THE GARBAGE
OF THE RICH
ALWAYS SMALLER THAN
THE GARBAGE OF THE POOR ?



**The
Dancing
Girl,**



**The
Aardvark,**

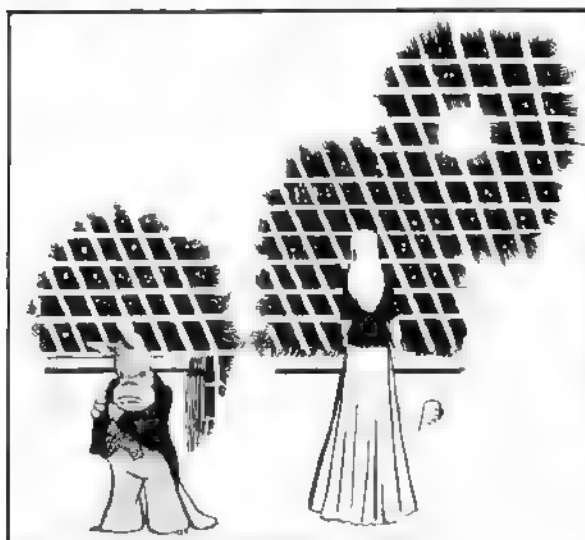
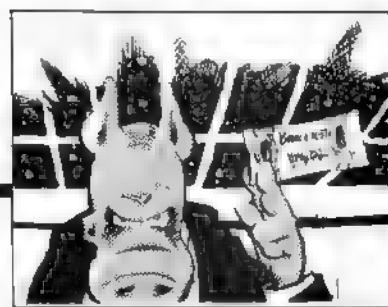


& their Legendary Love.



**Unaffected
by Time.**

...but money?!



CEREBUS
no 36

LIKE NO OTHER COMIC

By Dave Sim

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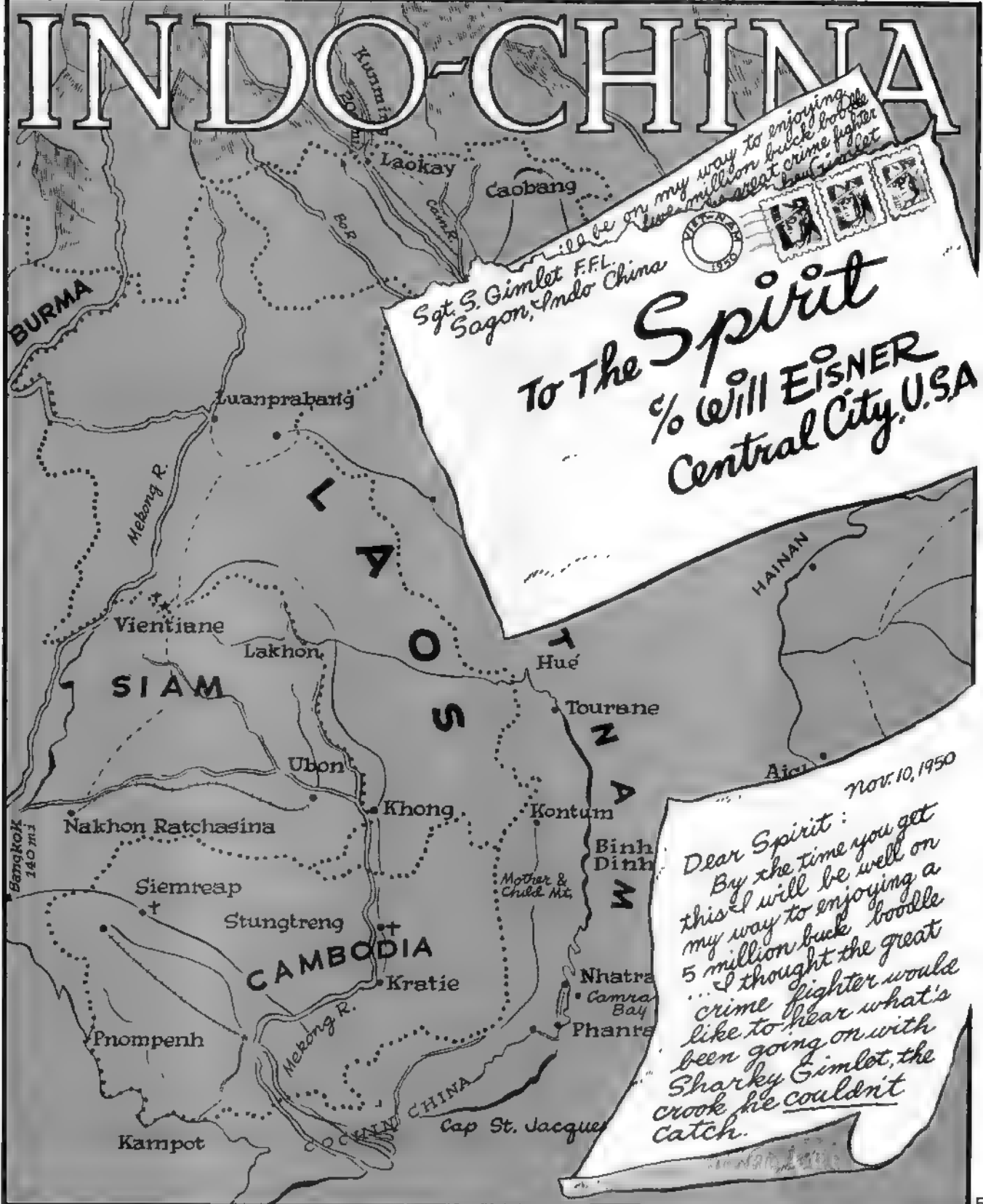
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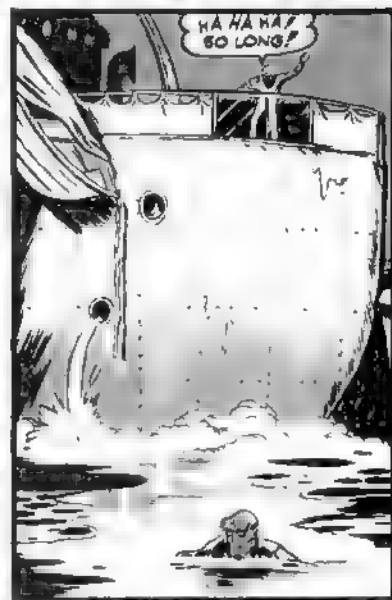
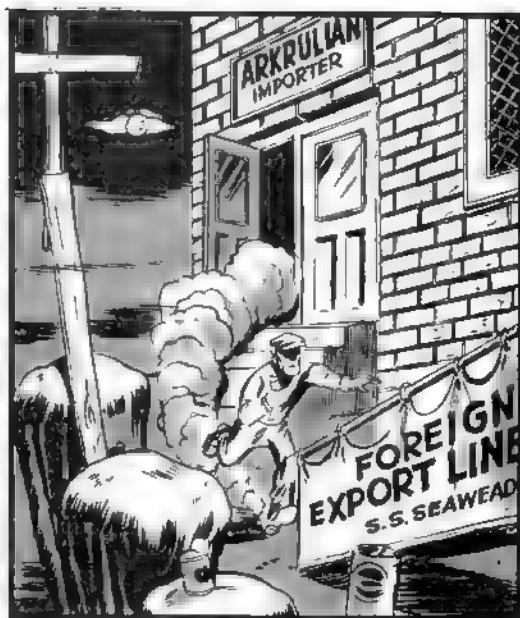
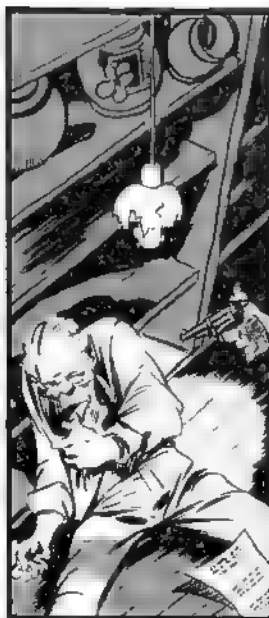
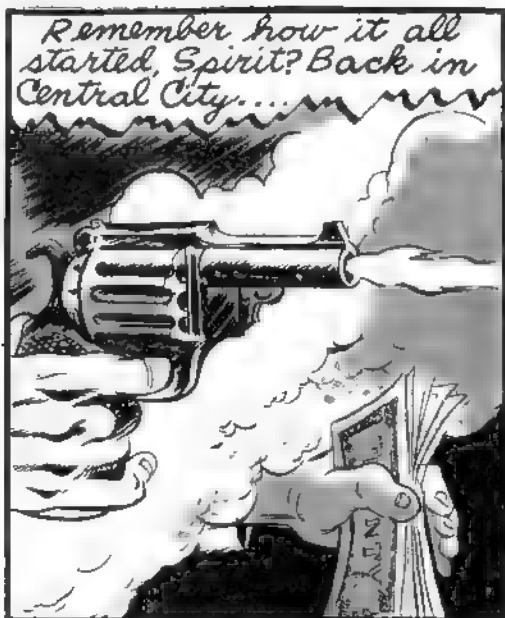
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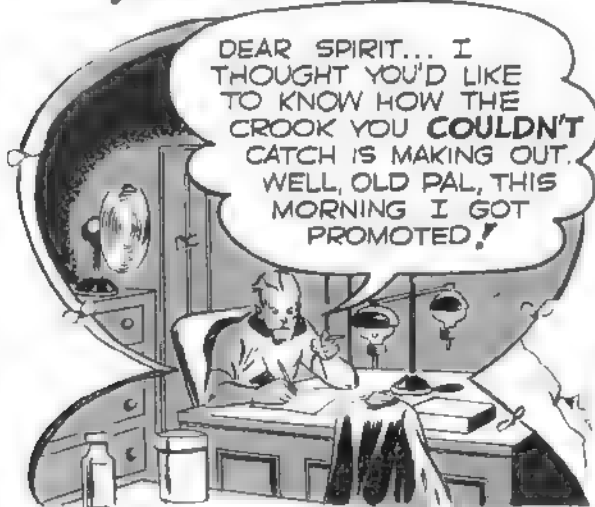
VIETNAM '50

INDO-CHINA





Never had I seen such a de-
flated guy... that gave me the
idea for all these letters...



DEAR SPIRIT... I
THOUGHT YOU'D LIKE
TO KNOW HOW THE
CROOK YOU COULDN'T
CATCH IS MAKING OUT.
WELL, OLD PAL, THIS
MORNING I GOT
PROMOTED!

Yeah, I was havin' a great time except
for one little thing... Most of the
legionnaires in my platoon were ex-Nazis.



AFTER ALL, HERR GIMLET,
WAR ISS A GAME VE ARE
USED TO! VEN DER
LAST WAR ENDED MY
COMRADES UND I
HAD TO FIND OTHERS!

YOU MAKE
IT SOUND
REAL
SIMPLE,
SCHMIDT!

I kept writing these letters to
you week after week... even after
we got shipped... and I was
always rubbing it in.

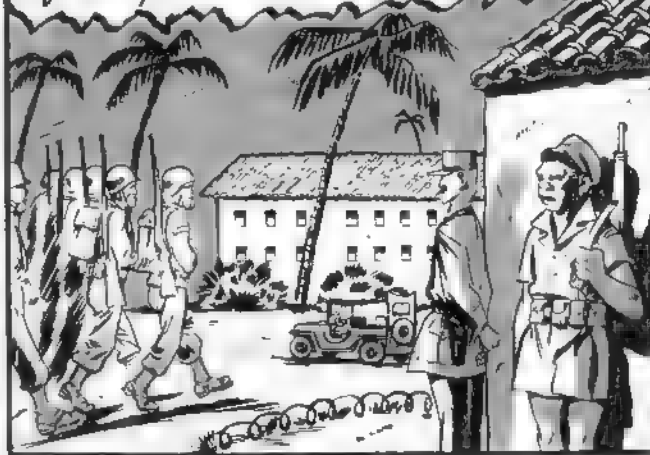


WHERE WE
HEADIN'?

VIET
NAM!

OR AS THE
WESTERN
COUNTRIES
CALL IT...
INDO CHINA!

There was a lot of trouble in
Indo-China. The guerrillas were
battling the French and the army
of Emperor Bao Dai...



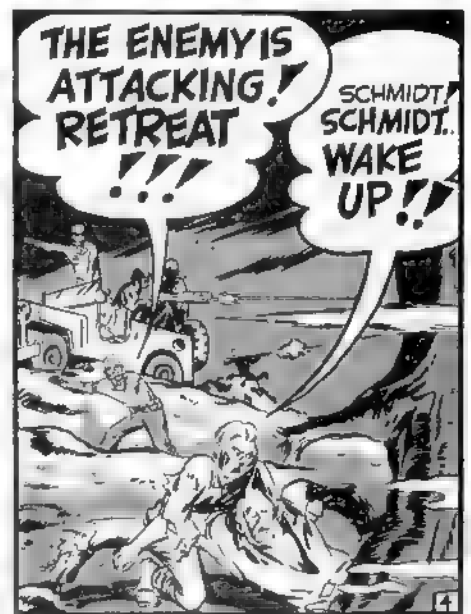
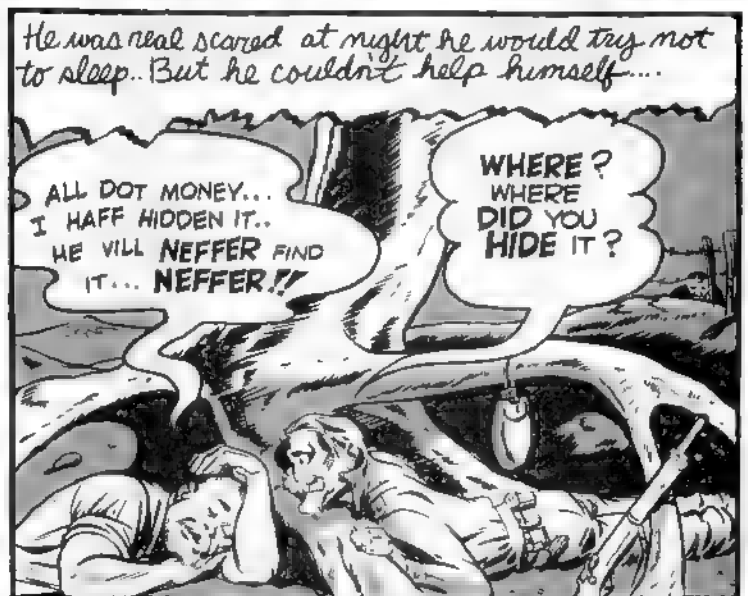
It was a tough war, most of
it mountain fighting, and
sometimes we'd battle days
without rest and then fall
asleep in our fox-holes.

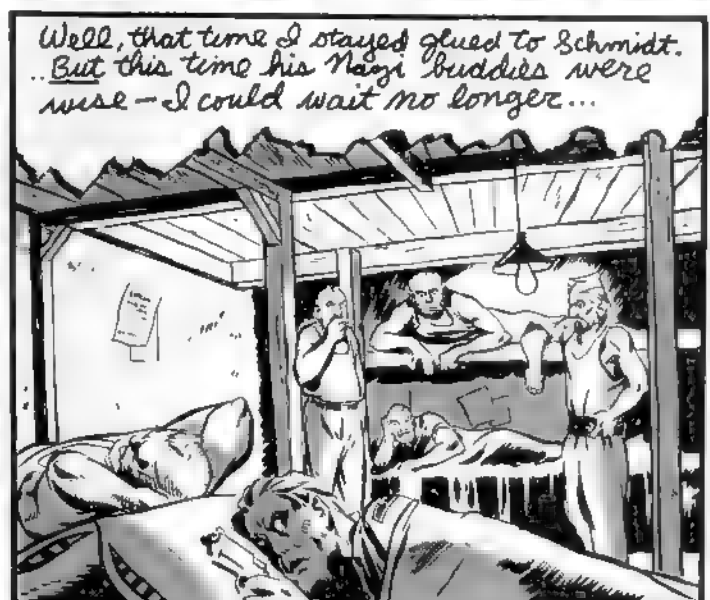
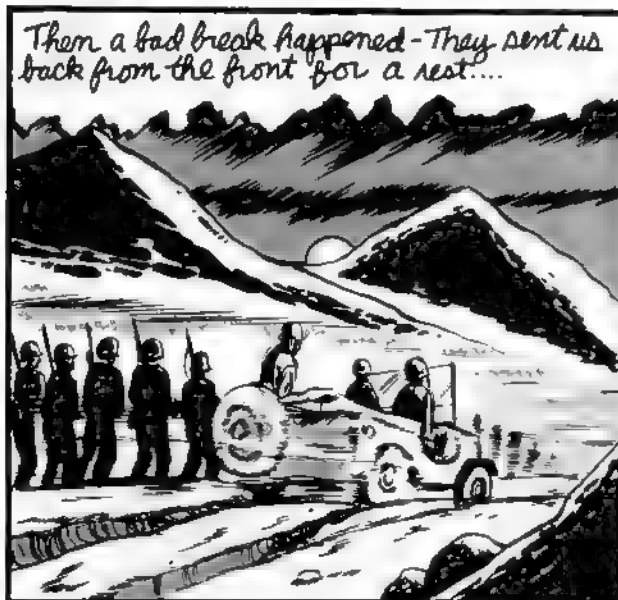
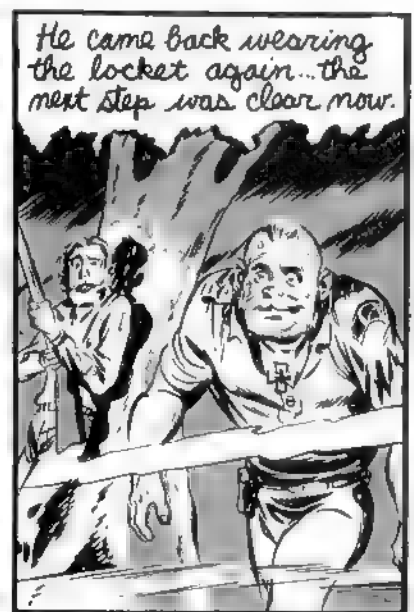
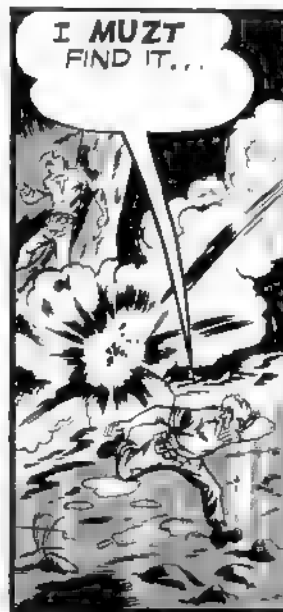


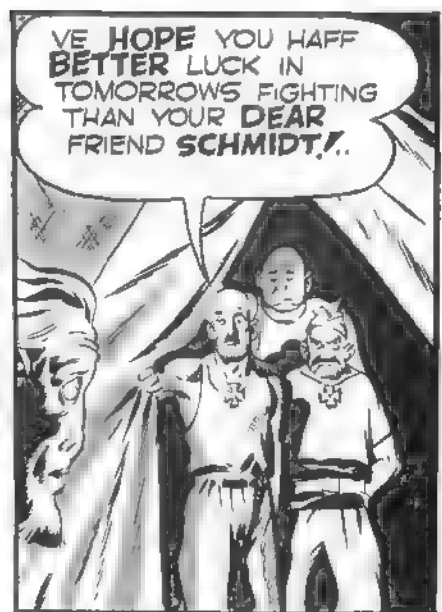
And that's just where we were when I
heard Schmidt talking in his sleep.

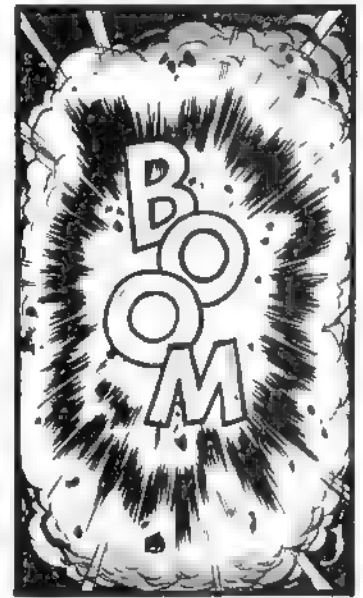
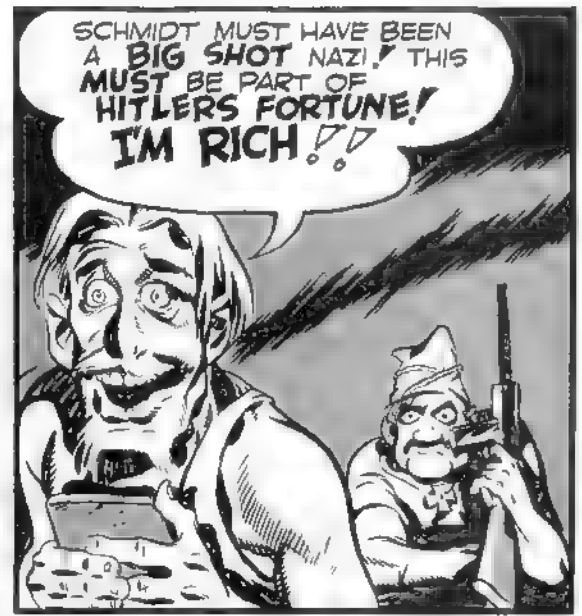
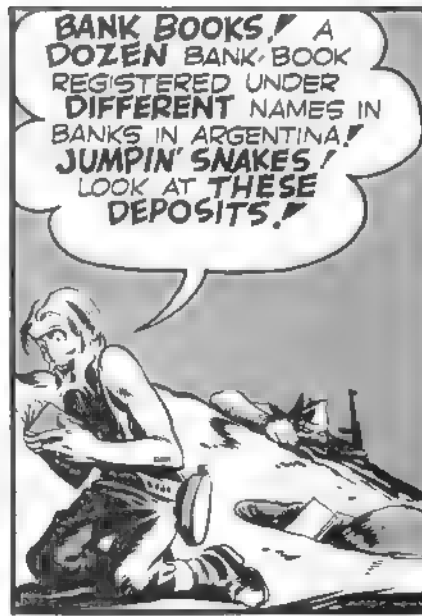


FIFE MILLION DOLLARS..
ALL MINE... FIFE
MILLION DOLLARS..
ALLES MEIN...
FÜNF MILLIONE...







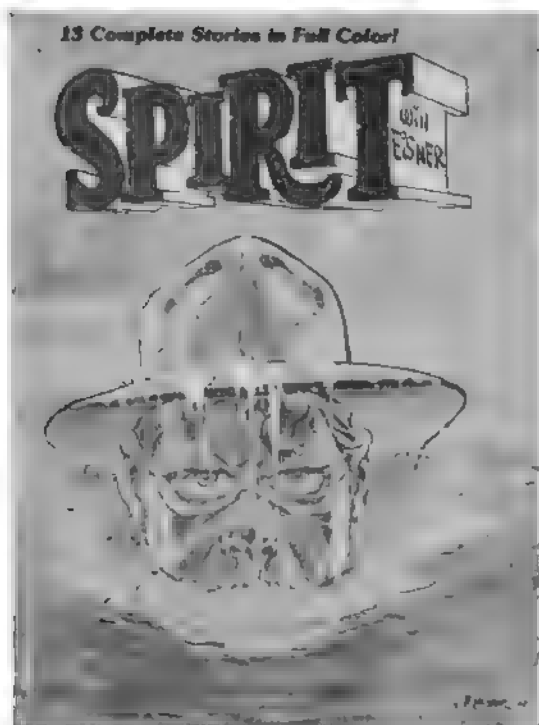


Four days later on Sept. 12, French forces, after a hard fought battle, regained the hill... The bodies of two legionnaires, dead for several days, were found among the casualties... Strewn near one body were shreds of paper, obviously torn to bits by machine gun bullets....



13 SPIRIT STORIES

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Will Eisner's *Spirit Color Album* is distributed by Bud Plant, Diamond Comics, Glenwood Distribution, Sea Gate Distributors, Comics Unlimited, Krupp Distribution, Pacific Comics, Capital City Distribution, Longhorn Books & 2nd Genesis.

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LETTERS

P*S STORY FANTASTIC

I really enjoy *The Spirit* and eagerly await the arrival of each new issue.

I gotta tell ya, though, Cat's story on *P*S* magazine was mucho fantastic! As a neo-Eisnerophile, I've always heard about the legendary *P*S*, but Cat's well-researched and documented story filled in a lot of holes for me.

Richard Pachter
7600 Gradana Blvd., Miramar Fla. 33023

NO COMPLAINTS

As usual, I greatly enjoyed *Spirit* No. 33. And kudos to Cat for a well written and highly enjoyable article on *P*S*. I knew ya could to it!

Also, I greatly appreciated the diversity of this issue's reprints. Just goes to show you that any issue that has both P'Gell and Ellen in it gets no complaint from me.

John A. Wilcox

40 Hales Ct., Westport CT, 06880

FRENCH COMICS

No. 31: another good issue, starting with another cover full of water. One should do an analysis of water as an element of the sets and plots of *The Spirit*. Will always seems to come back to it. When asked about it at a convention in Montreal a few years ago, the only explanation he could find is that he is an Aquarius.

One of the main points of the issue was the discussion between Will and Harvey Kurtzman. I would like to correct something Mr. Eisner says about the predecessors of *Pilote*. Although weeklies like *Spirou*, *Tintin* and *Pilote* did in fact sometimes open their pages to creators who could write and draw with great freedom, the latter book was the first to do it every issue on every page. It was indeed a seminal venture and Goscinny is starting to get back all the credit he is due. For awhile, it was fashionable to downplay his role in the matter. It is a fact that without that opening up, *Metal Hurlant*, *Fluide Glacial*, *L'echo des Savanes*, etc....could not have appeared as soon. Even the Asterix phenomenon alone could not have done as much to make the comic strip a respectable literary form in francophone Europe.

As for the undergrounds Mr. Eisner refers to, I cannot see which one he means. Moliterni's magazine *Phenix* was a sort of deluxe fanzine, containing mainly analyses, retrospectives and interviews. Although it set the scene partially for the "explosion" that fol-

lowed, I do not think we should credit it with as much influence as Mr. Eisner does. And that is not to say that French comics before *Pilote* were not good, on the contrary; they were as good as they are now. Today, authors are simply capable of doing something else than what was permitted in the children's publication of the '50s and '60s.

Also, I tend to agree with Mr. Kurtzman that the situation of the publishing market in Europe has a lot to do with the overall quality of comics over there. The permanence of the books and the care taken in the production and printing does a lot to inspire an author. The market may also be more favorable than in the U.S. The little anecdote about Pratt is amusing and revealing; \$100 for a Pratt page! Indeed! Poor Stan Lee, he did not know who he was talking to.

Luc Pomerleau

44 Bedard, No. 502, Hull (Quebec) J8Y 5Z7

BEST COVER CHOICE?

The shadows, shadings, and exaggerated perspectives employed in "The Haunted House" (*Spirit* 33), are the hallmark of Eisner's brooding artistry. This story is paradigmatic of *The Spirit* series, and sure would've made for a much more piquant cover creation than the recurrent P'Gell motif which was instead utilized.

Kevin C. McConnell

617 Juno Lane, Denton, TX 76201

COLOR SPIRITS? WOW!

Congratulations on the *Spirit Color Album No. 1*. Truly a superb job. This is the kind of production people like Gil Kane and others have been predicting for years, and fans like me have been starved for. I'd rather spend my money on such a great product than the cheaply printed comic books being produced by the major companies. I hope other great cartoons will follow suit and some day be packaged in such a neat way. Can you imagine such an album of Sunday vintage "Krazy Kats" or "Little Nemos?" Wow! Until then, I'll keep buying the color *Spirits*.

Donald H. Mangus

3019 Oliver Street, Dallas, TX 75205

OFF COLOR

Cat Yronwode concludes her introduction to the *Spirit* album with "...and seeing it in color is all the better."

continued on page 61

FREE SPIRIT CLASSIFIEDS

CLASSIFIED AD POLICY: We will run your ad absolutely FREE, but please try to keep your ad under 25 words. We reserve the right to edit ads to fit. Ads will NOT be repeated automatically. Resubmit for each issue if you want your ad or portions of it rerun. Ads must be related to *The Spirit*. Send ads to: Spirit Classifieds, Box 7-S, Princeton, Wis. 54968.

SPIRIT ITEMS WANTED

WARREN SPIRITS 3, 6, 8-16; Harvey No. 1; Spirit Bags 1-4. C.E.F.N., Flat 2, 115 Wintthrop Ave., Nedlands 6009, Western Australia

KITCHEN SPIRIT No. 2, James Carroll, 169 E. Tulane, Columbus, Ohio 43202

WARREN SPIRIT Co or Special and Kitchen Sink "underground" Spirit No. 2, Joseph Webb, 745 Maple Avenue, Conneaut, Ohio 44030

ARMY MOTORS/P*S magazines through 1951 and any other Eisner Army art 1942-1945. Ken Quattro, Box 51, Westland, Michigan 48187

SPIRIT BAG No. 3 in good condit on. Must be complete. Send price to John Carfizzi, 1837 61st Street, Brooklyn, NY 11204

HARVEY SPIRIT No. 2, Warren Spirit No. 12, 13, 14, 15, 16; Spirit Bags No. 1-4. Reasonab e prices only. Raymond R. Guilanma, Jr., 4360 Kirkwood, Zachary, LA 70791.

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WARREN SPIRIT No. 1. \$3 postpaid Classic Movie and Comic Center, 19047 Midd e belt, Livonia, Michigan 48152 Attention: Mail Order Dept.

SPIRIT SECTIONS 11/15/42, \$20; 12/13/42, \$20; 7/12/42, \$25; 7/18/43, \$20; 3/31/46, \$18, Police Comics No. 80, \$30. Add \$1 for postage & handling. Send s.a.s.e. for larger list to Joseph D. N. DeMaio, Rt 8 Box 131, Lenoir, N.C. 28645

SPIRIT PORTFOLIOS, outer cover slightly scuffed, insides perfect. Signed by Eisner, limited to 1500 numbered editions. Regularly \$40. \$25 for these slightly damaged editions. Only two left. Kitchen Sink Press, No 2 Swamp Road, Princeton, WI 54968

SPIRIT BAG No. 1 and "bootleg" bag; both in mint condition. \$40 for both, postpaid Warren No. 3 and 6 16, all for \$30 postpaid Kitchen Sink No. 17, 19, 23, 25-31, a l for \$20 postpaid. \$70 takes the whole lot. Billy Roberts, 122 Central, Box 4, Maize, Kansas 67101

KITCHEN SPIRITS No. 17-27 (11 issue set) Good condition. \$30 postpaid. W. T. Ranney, 709 Tr phammer Road, Apt. 1 2A, Ithaca, N.Y. 14850.

JULES FEIFFER'S "The Great Comic Book Heroes" containing a complete 1941 Spirit section in full color and chapter on Eisner. Beautiful hardcover album in near-mint condition with original dustjacket. \$10 postpaid D. Marden, Box 252, Rutland, Mass. 01543.

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& Paul Gulacy

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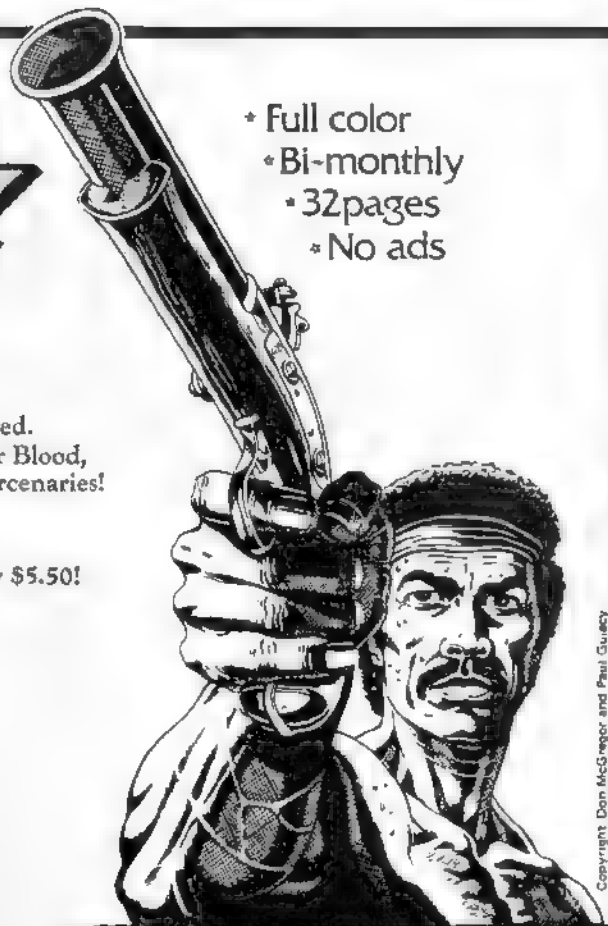
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Well, not really. The color in the book is more than a little disappointing. It is occasionally effective, but more often only serves to undermine Eisner's intent. The worst example is also the most obvious: Freddy changes his suit between the first two pages of "Ten Minutes." There is a similar change for Satin earlier in the book. Less glaring, perhaps, but no less annoying, are the captions obscured by heavy tones (page 13 and 14, among others), and the blatantly inappropriate hues applied to other settings. Bright orange subway floors? Come on, now!

I think the anonymous colorist took on a little more than he could handle. Admirable attempts at modeling skin tones almost always look smeared and blotchy, with end effects that are sometimes amusing, sometimes grotesque. (Ellen looks like gangrene is about to set in on page 23.) The characters always have a bruised and angry appearance. Perversely, some fairly complex scenes that would benefit from detailed color work are done in one or two tones, as with the boxing crowd in "Sammy and Delilah," or parts of "Life Below."

Color aside, though, the *Spirit Color Album* is a nice collection that does a good job of reflecting the variety and scope of the series. I think a science fiction story in place of one of the fairy tales would have been nice,

maybe the one about Miss Cosmek, but that's a minor complaint. I hope that future books will be as well chosen and reflect more fully the high standards embodied in the magazine.

I'm excited by the news of Kitchen Sink's forthcoming line of comic art albums. If I might make a suggestion, Harvey Kurtzman's *Jungle Book* seems a natural for the series. Besides the first Goodman Beaver story, this 1959 paperback is chock full of Kurtzman's manic wit and deft art. It has been out of print for more than 20 years and is way overdue for re-release.

Now, if you can just resist the temptation to color it in....

Pierce Askegren
902 N. Sterling Blvd., Sterling VA 22170

(Editor's note: A black and white edition of Harvey Kurtzman's "Jungle Book" is on our publishing schedule.)

CAN'T WAIT

The *Spirit Color Album No. 1* was a very well put together package; I regret terribly that like many other Spirit/Eisner fans and followers, we will have to wait an entire year to see some more material in such vivid and eye-catching color. Speaking of the color, not only was I taken aback by the fine job done but even friends of mine who aren't into comics like myself, also

enjoyed it.

If you're thinking of putting another color album together before the end of the year — PLEASE DO!

John J. Lewandowski
456 Central Ave., Jersey City, N.J. 07307

COLOR ALBUM IS GREAT

The *Spirit Color Album* is great. Beautiful! I'm all for this European-Comics format. Good luck!!
Glenn Bray
Sylmar, CA

WANTS COLOR BOOKS

Enjoying the *Will Eisner Color Treasury*, *Spirit Color Album Volume I*, *A Contract With God*, *Color Book*, *Spirit Magazine*.

Hope there will be more of the color album series available, and wish Eisner would compile a book of comic techniques, tips and information of comic art. This would make a collector's item as well as helpful tips about comics.

Mad Mona
San Antonio, TX

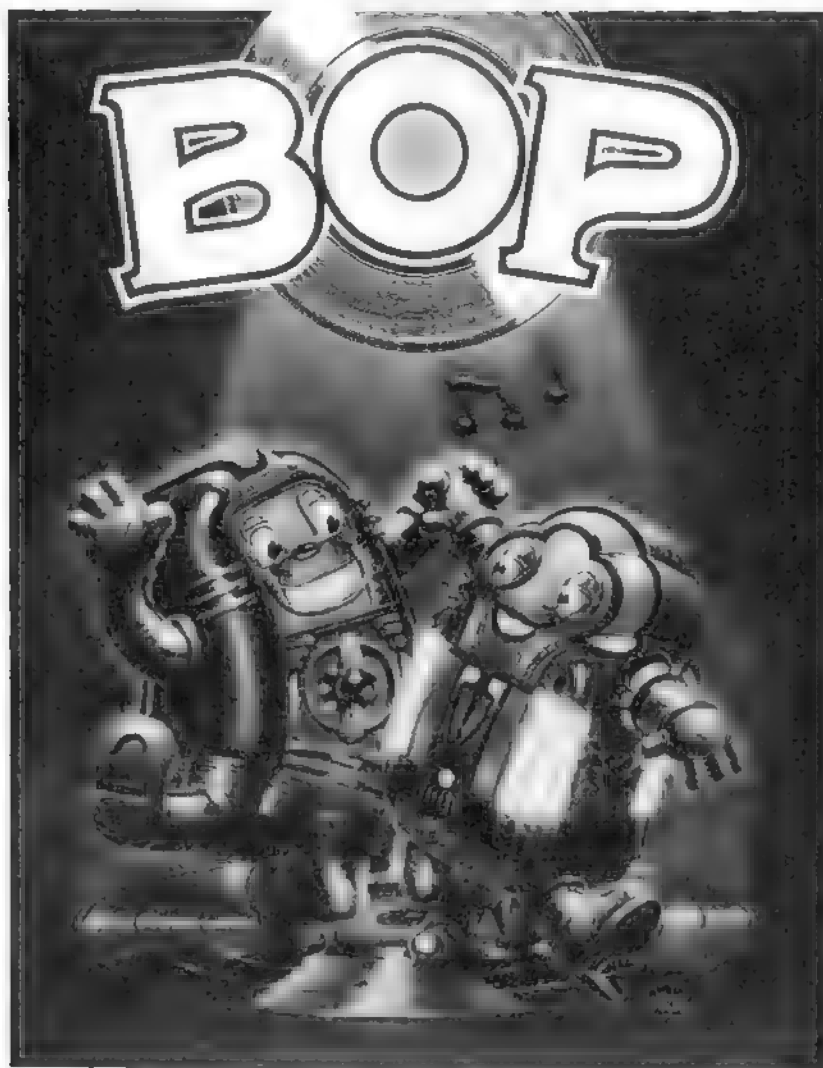
(Ed. Note: another Eisner color book is scheduled to be released within a year.)

SPIRIT A BARGAIN

In today's high-priced economy, a 16-year-old comic collector can't figure on getting too much high quality

continued on page 63

AT LAST! MUSIC AND COMICS



cover art © 1982 John Pound

This all-new quarterly comics magazine is devoted to **all kinds of music by all kinds of contributors**. Editor **Cat Yronwode** has assembled a first issue consisting of **Alex Toth** (a tribute to **Wally Wood** and **Russ Manning**)... "East Virginia Blues" by **Trina Robbins**... "Surf City" by **Rick Geary**... "Teen Beat '63" by **Marc Hempel**... "Baby Blues" by **Joe Schwind**... "Kitz 'n Katz" by **Bob Laughlin**... "Cowboy Song" by **Harvey (American Splendor) Pekar** and **Sean Carroll**... A **Jerry Lee Lewis** Interview adapted for comics by **Cat Yronwode & Bill Fugate**... "Losers of the Blues," a parody of **Crumb's "Heroes of the Blues"** by **Bruce Sweeney & D. Lieberman**... "Mystery Dance" by **Doug Erb**... **plus:** articles by **Ron Courtney**, **Murray Bishoff** and **George Moonogian** and reviews by **Cat Yronwode** and **Dean (Eclipse) Mullaney!** All in a fat magazine with extra heavy covers (beautiful cover painting by **John Pound**) for \$2.75. On sale in May.

62 Available through all major dealers and distributors. Published by **Kitchen Sink Comics**, Princeton, Wisconsin.

art for a relatively low price. But the Spirit has everything a fan like me wants: the world's greatest art, the world's greatest crime fighter, and last but not least, a great price at 3½ cents a page. Keep this up and I might start to subscribe instead of going to ye faithful dealer.

Chris Doellner
524 Meade, Daville IL 61832

SPIRIT NOT A BARGAIN

The name of the magazine is *The Spirit* and I enjoy reading the reprints of *The Spirit*, however, 28 to 30 pages each issue for \$2.50 is a rather stiff tariff to pay for this enjoyment. I buy the magazine to read these reprints. I think the theme, "Will Eisner, the Man and his Works" has been chronicled to the point where it is becoming boring. Add to this sometimes 17 pages of ads each issue and "the spirit" of the publication is submerged and overshadowed by all the other material.

Get *The Spirit* back on track, otherwise I will reluctantly reconsider my support. As I say, \$2.50 per issue is stiff for 28 pages of reprint material.

Frank Ward
753 Kingston Rd., Lexington, KY 40505

SPIRIT JAM A FAILURE

The Spirit Jam was a failure.

Somehow you completely misunderstood what fans have been asking for all these years. We wanted an important, decisive Eisner story, not a '70s or '80s redo of themes he's already covered. Who needs another "Octopus is after me" story? We've got lots of them.

The fans also wanted to see a Spirit adventure drawn by their other favorite artists...not by just anyone who happened to be around. A version by artists whose work would complement the character, not run against it. We asked for Berni Wrightson, Neal Adams, Jim Steranko, Wally Wood, etc. You give us Trina Robbins, Howard Cruse, Ernie Colon, Jim Engel, Chuck Fiala, etc...who may be very fine people and swell artists, but never in my right mind did I ever desire a Spirit adventure drawn by them.

As for the story...no, on second thought I won't comment on that. You take an unfinished story (doubtless it was considered less than spectacular in the first place; correctly so) originally set for 7 or 8 pages and balloon it, with lots of hot air and empty space, to 36 pages. Who needs to comment on a thing like that?

The majority of the book was mediocre, so no need for comment. The rest broke down into either disappointments or successes.

DISAPPOINTMENTS: Pages 41 & 42: How could three such wonderful talents produce such a lackluster pair of pages?

Page 49: you would think that after 15 years of producing stupid big-boob sex jokes, the man would leap at the chance to get Two-Fisted once more. Nope.

SUCSESSES: The Eisner pages. At least he still knows how to handle the character and himself...but I have my doubts as to what will happen to *The Spirit* when he is no longer with us. Hmm. Since he's still with us and this issue happened anyway...?? Pages 30-32: Bee-you-tee-full! At last, a man who obviously has a deep love for the character and its creator. Mike Gilbert may not be as well-known as the majority of the other contributors to this mess, but his



O'Neil/Miller/Austin: Lackluster?

pages at least had heart. Pages 58-59: In a book full of useless fight scenes, Richard Corben's flawlessly staged and paced combat is a rose among weeds. Pages 25-27: Because they are apart from the main body of the story and, as such, not a Spirit story, were also enjoyable.

The best summary of this story was from Cat Yronwode herself on page 60 as she looked at a page and said, "Oh, Wow! Look at this feathering." In other words, lots of little tickles... but that's about it.

Cat said in her introduction that this was a one-and-only-never-to-be-repeated Spirit jam. I sincerely hope this is a promise.

Brian J. Buniak
71 Yale Avenue, Avenel, NJ 07001

(Editor's Note: Just for the record, the jam was not really based on an original 7 or 8 page story script from the 50s. This was simply a plot device.)

WOODY AWARD: 2nd TO EPIC

Attached are the results of the 1981 Woody Awards, named after the unfortunate and untimely death of Wally Wood, a man whose dedication to the form and beautiful comic art certainly set high standards of quality rarely equalled.

Perhaps you could find space in your publication to list the results.

Your magazine, *Will Eisner's The Spirit*, finished second behind *Epic* in the Favorite Magazine category.

Artist: John Byrne; Writer: Chris Claremont, Inker: Terry Austin; Story: "Fate of the Phoenix" from X-Men 137; Comic Book: X-Men, New Comic Book: New Teen Titans; Comic Magazine: Epic; Cover: Mike Kaluta, for Time Warp 6, Alternative Comic: Captain Canuck, Hall of Fame: Jack Kirby

Bob Conway
265 South Harlan, Lakewood, Colorado 80226

SPIRIT 28: BEST COVER PAINTING?

Enclosed are the results of the 1st Annual Comic Fan Awards (a.k.a. the 1981 Koppy Awards, named for the alter-ego of Supersnipe, "the boy with the most comic books in the world.")

Congratulations to you and Will Eisner for winning "Best Cover Painting" for *The Spirit* No.28. Interestingly, the cover of *The Spirit* No.31 placed 5th in this same category.

Short Story—Writing: Dr. Strange 46, "A Moment's Peace"; Short Story—Art: Dr. Strange 46, "A Moment's Peace"; Short Story—Color: Dr. Strange 46, "A Moment's Peace"; Novelette—Writing: Daredevil 169, "Devils"; Novelette—Art: Bizarre Adventures 26, "I Got the Yo-Yo... You Got the String"; Novel—Art: Daredevil 170 thru 172; Novel—Color: Dr. Strange 49 thru 51; Cover Drawing: X-Men 141; Cover Painting (tie) Spirit 28 and Cerebus 26; Dramatic Presentation: Superman II.

David Craven
1836 Glenwood Ave., Independence, MO 64052

WANTS MR. MYSTIC STORY

The Spirit continues to be one of the most enjoyable additions to my collection

But I really wish that among your reprints you could include one of my favorite stories in my stack of original Spirit sections. The Mr. Mystic back-up tale in the Dec. 28, 1941 section fascinated me as the only time the Spirit, Ebony, Lady Luck, Peecolo, Mr. Mystic and Chowderhead all got together in one adventure. The simple four page tale does not have the more interesting plotting we usually see, but as a curiosity, it is priceless.

Also, this is probably one of the few appearances of the Spirit not listed in Cat's index—certainly the only one that she knew about and forgot! (And I know she was aware of the appearance as I pointed it out to her when she borrowed my Spirit sections as she researched the index.)

Fellow Spirit fans, let Will and company know that you'd like to see this unusual part of the Spirit history!

Jerome Sinkovec
Publisher, The COMIC READER
N92 W17420 Appleton Ave.,
Menomonee Falls WI 53051

(Editor's note: The story mentioned was indeed forgotten by Cat Yronwode and will be published in a future Christmas issue.)

SPIRIT 'PERFECT FUSION'

...You somehow manage to create with artboard and pen a four-dimensional space-time world which exemplifies a perfect fusion of form and content unmatched, in my estimation, anywhere in the art field. ...Your characters and stories have an existential quality about them, they deal with the human condition, not in an idealized manner, but as it really is....

Raul Wrona
115 Beatrice St., Toronto, Ontario,
Canada M6J2T2

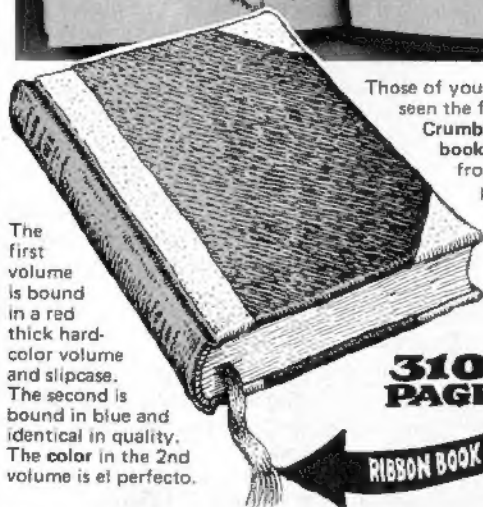
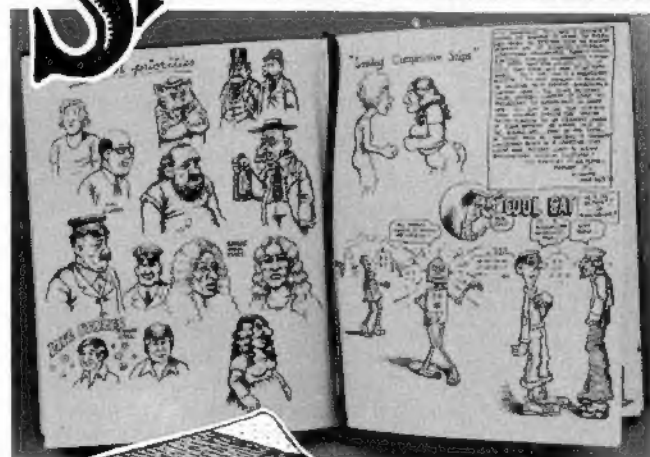
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"ASK WILL EISNER"

INFLUENCES & BRUSH REFURBISHING

Underground cartoonist Kim Deitch, of San Francisco, CA, writes: "In his interview with Harvey Kurtzman, Eisner states that he knows how to refurbish old Winsor Newton brushes. I wonder if he could expand on that. I have some ideas of my own on the subject, but a word from one of the great modern masters of brush inking would be of great value in these days when Winsor Newton brushes seem to be getting both worse and more expensive. I'd also like to know what sorts of fiction writers influenced Will when he was growing up and whether or not the medium of fiction writing was a big influence on his comic work."

Will Eisner replies: "It depends on the condition of the brush to be refurbished...."

"1. As any bald man can tell you, hair cannot be replaced once lost.

"2. When brushes blunt, try trimming off a few outside hairs.

"3. Wash with soap and water (warm, not hot), work-ink out of the heel.

"4. Wash brush often.

"As to the other part of the question, short story writers were a big influence. O. Henry, DeMaupassant, Ambrose Bierce, Ben Hecht, Ring Lardner....the short story form, popular in the 1930s was important training for the comic book form."

PUZZLE OF LATTER TITLES

Craig Boldman of Fairfield, Ohio asks "why was the Spirit so openly referred to as Denny Colt (even in the story titles) during those outer space stories near the end of the series run. This has puzzled me for some time."

Will Eisner answers: "I was getting the feeling that the whole realistic story theme would be better served by a mask-less character hero. This concept was never truly tested.

PHILOSOPHY IN WORK

Rodney Schroeter of Belcourt, North Dakota, has this question: "Every artist puts his philosophy into his own work, whether consciously or sub-consciously. Are you cognizant of what your philosophy is, and do you discuss it—or do you believe the work should speak for itself? Do you care to discuss how an artist's philosophy can determine the success of that work with the public? (Example: Affirmation-of-life vs. man -as-degenerate philosophy?)

Will Eisner replies: "Indeed!! ...But I think of it as... the artist's philosophy 'finds' its way into his own work. Not only philosophy but elements that have to do with his own physiology as well. Of course I'm conscious of my own philosophy, but not always conclusively. The search for, and the feelings about values is never finished, and affects his work. Everything an artist does is touched by it. 'Success' or a 'successful work' cannot be easily defined! Certainly not without establishing arbitrary parameters! The best one can say is that an innate honesty toward one's work will always be evident and will evoke respect for it. The work usually speaks for itself."

Send YOUR Question to: "Ask Will Eisner" c/o The Spirit Magazine, No.2 Swamp Road, Princeton, Wisconsin 54968



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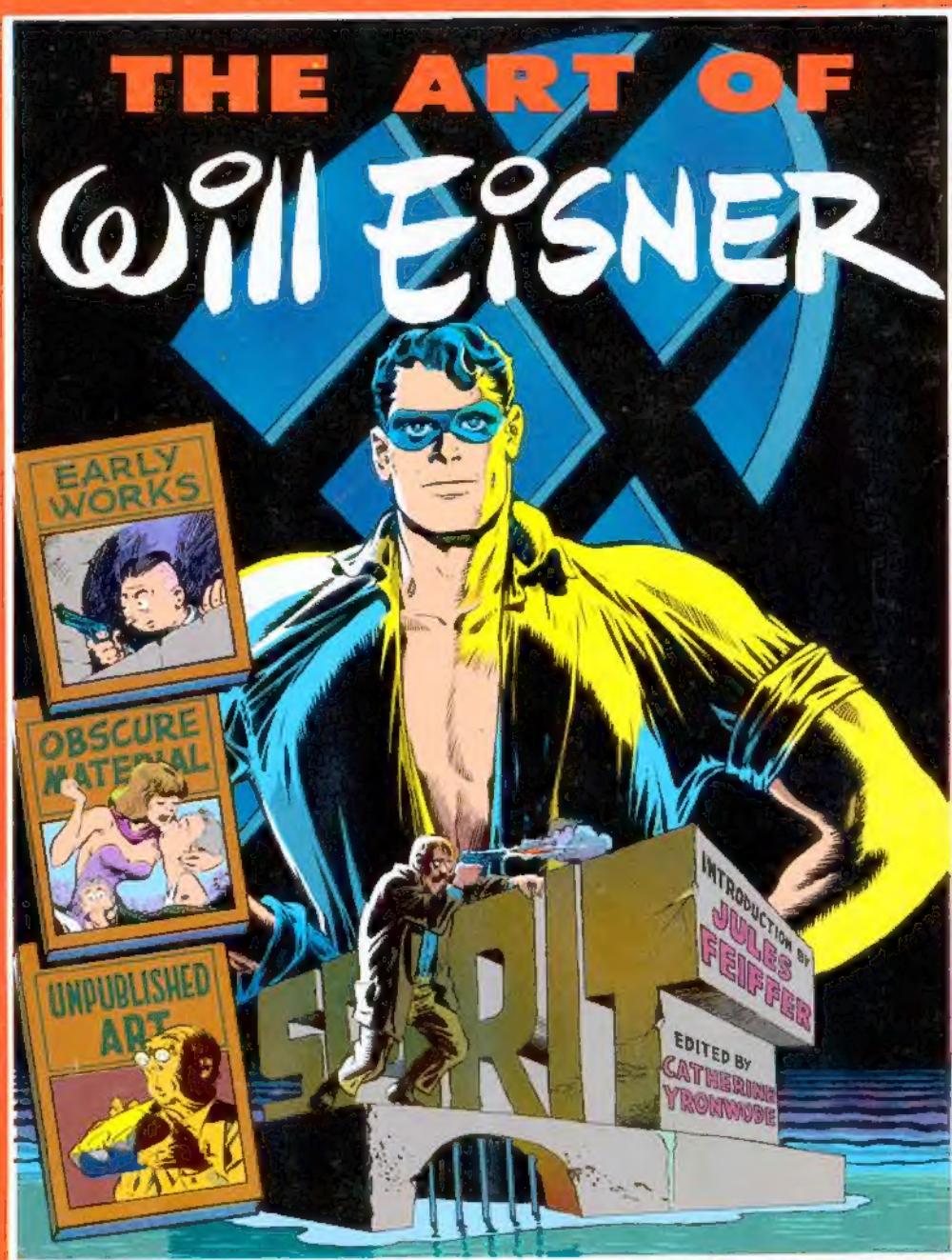
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INTRODUCTION BY JULES
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